ECUMENICAL RELATIONS

OF THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN THE VARIOUS BILATERAL DIALOGUES

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

A. BACKGROUND

(1) During the past ten years there has been a tremendous increase in the number of conversations between different Christian communions and confessions. These conversations, mostly bilateral, have been initiated by the churches or communions involved and have been conducted quite independently of the multilateral ecumenical work of the World Council of Churches. In recent years basic questions have also been asked within Lutheranism about the intent, method, coordination and results of these dialogues. It has become evident that in addressing these basic questions one is *ipso facto* making a fundamental evaluation of the present state and future direction of the ecumenical movement and Lutheran involvement in it.

(2) It was with this general background in mind that the Executive Committee established a Working Group on the Interrelations between the Various Bilateral Dialogues in February of 1974. As decided by the Executive Committee, the tasks have included the following:

(3) 1. to investigate the interrelations between the conducted and foreseen interconfessional dialogues of the LWF, e.g. with respect to

(4) a) the multiplicity of bilateral conversations,

(5) b) the agreements and possible differences between the results published hitherto in the form of the reports of Malta and Pullach and the Leuenberger Agreement,

(6) c) the problems and implications which possibly result from the parallelism of Malta, Pullach and Leuenberg;

(7) 2. to discuss the problems of inter-Lutheran unity in the context of the ecumenical commitment of the LWF;

(8) 3. based on those considerations, to present a proposal for the development of an ecumenical strategy of the LWF in the sense of long-term planning, taking into account the necessary coordination of all dialogues and containing the plans for an encounter and approach between the LWF and those Lutheran Churches, which do not belong to the Federation.(1)

(9) Carried over from the 1973 meeting of the Executive Committee was a request that the group consider "the issues of identity underlying the LWF/WCC relationship".(2)

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(1) Minutes of the Special LWF Executive Committee Meeting, February 1974, Geneva, Exhibit C, para. 3-11.

(2) Minutes of the LWF Executive Committee Meeting, 29.8.-4.9.1973, Eisenach, No XI.C, p. 18.

(10) In order to accomplish the tasks given to it, the Interrelations Group examined once again the fundamental reasons for the existence of the Federation and its originally stated ecumenical purposes.

B. ECUMENICAL PURPOSES OF THE LWF.

(11) A decade before the establishment of the LWF, the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Convention made a statement about the ecumenical character of Lutheranism:

(12) "Recognizing that there are true Christians in every Church of whatever name, the Lutheran Churches of the world should approach the question of their relationship with general (ecumenical) movements in the spirit of catholicity and without hostility or prejudice. While they should make no effort to gloss genuine differences, they should nevertheless proceed in the sincere and humble desire to render service and to cooperate in works of Christian love... They are ready to recognize true Christians under whatever name or organization they may be found. The universal appeal of the Lutheran interpretation of the Gospel, the elemental quality of the Lutheran understanding of faith, and the catholic breadth of the Lutheran doctrine of the Church, impart to Lutheranism an ecumenical quality.... In the truest sense Lutheranism is itself an ecumenical movement."(3)

(13) With the foundation of the LWF (1947) this ecumenical intent was stressed in the Constitution according to which it is among the purposes of the LWF "to foster Lutheran participation in ecumenical movements".(4)

(14) In the period afterwards, there came a further deepening and intensification of ecumenical interest and commitment. At the 3rd Assembly in Minneapolis (1957) the ecumenical question was one of the most important topics. The theses worked out there on "The Unity of the Church in Christ" emphasized: that "We may find some consolation but no excuse in referring to an invisible unity of all true believers. We know that the ministry of reconciliation is jeopardized by the lack of manifested unity." The theses appeal to the ecumenical openness and freedom given in the Lutheran confession: "Wherever we hear the Gospel preached in its truth and purity and see the Sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there we may be assured that the one Church of Christ is present. There nothing separates us from our brethren and both faith and love constrain us to overcome our dividedness".(5)

(15) The strengthened ecumenical alignment was expressed at the 4th Assembly (Helsinki 1963) by a new wording in the Constitution, which now states that the tasks of the LWF include "encouraging the interest and participation of the Lutheran Churches in ecumenical movements and deepening their responsibility for such movements". (6) At the same time a "Lutheran Foundation for Interconfessional Research" was founded, the purpose of which should be "to contribute to the fulfilment by the Lutheran churches of their ecumenical responsibility in the area of theology".(7)

(3)The Lutheran World Almanach, 1934-1937, pp. 36-37.
(4)Text of the LWF Constitution 1947, Art. III.
(5) The Proceedings of the Third Assembly of the LWF,Minneapolis 1957, Minneapolis 1958, p.86.

(16) It is therefore quite natural that according to the present Constitution (Art. III) three of the six functions of the LWF have an ecumenical intent. The first purpose says the LWF shall :

(17) "Further a united witness before the world to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the power of God for salvation."

(18) All other purposes represent an unfolding of the first.

(19) "Cultivate unity of faith and confession among the Lutheran Churches of the world.

(20) Foster Lutheran interest, concern for, and participation in ecumenical movements".

(21) By the time of the Evian Assembly in 1970, the LWF faced a new ecumenical situation. A number of factors influenced this development.

(22) First is the growing concern among member churches to manifest their world-wide fellowship. The Federation represents this concern for Lutheran fellowship at the world level - a concern which has intensified in recent years. The work of the LWF is permeated with a growing recognition of the interdependence of all the people of the earth.

(23) A second factor has been the increasing number of church union conversations. The LWF welcomes this type of effort for church unity and is ready to support its member churches in such negotiations.(8) It draws special attention to the importance of not bypassing fundamental theological problems in local union conversations, since otherwise these will in the long run have a divisive rather than a unifying effect. But the LWF has also found it necessary in this context to stress that a rigid adherence to the Lutheran tradition and fellowship can complicate and retard local union efforts.

(24) Thirdly, the official entry of the Roman Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement has had a powerful influence on the world confessional families including the Lutheran World Federation. Since Vatican II many bilateral contacts and conversations have resulted at world, regional and national levels. Stimulated in part by these Roman Catholic relationships a number of dialogues have also been initiated with other churches and world confessional bodies.

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(6) Constitution of the LWF, August 1964, Art. III.
(7) Constitution of the Lutheran Institute for Interconfessional Research, Art. III.
(8) Cf. the 1970 Statement on the LWF attitude to Churches engaged in union negotiations.

C. EVIAN AND AFTER

(25) The Evian Assembly in 1970 provided a clear outline of guiding policies on the ecumenical commitment of the LWF. The basic stance is that the struggle for the unity of the Church must at the same time be directed to the reconciliation and fellowship of the whole of humankind.

(26) Section II of the Assembly stressed the urgency of Christian unity and in this connection drew attention to the following impulses:

- the yearning for the unity of the Church for the sake of its mission,
- the work of the Holy Spirit in the renewal of the Church,
- the challenge of a world which is increasingly becoming one.(9)

(27) In relation to the last of these, Lutheran churches were to be concerned for the need for common action on urgent world problems, that cooperation with all people of good will should be learned.

(28) It also stressed that unity among Lutheran churches is a precondition of the credibility of their search for Christian unity. In this connection the Evian Assembly laid great stress on the missionary aspect and the concrete context of witness in our efforts towards Lutheran unity.

(29) The future tasks of the LWF were defined as follows:

"a) To provide regular information on possibilities and opportunities of inner-Lutheran fellowship, as well as Lutheran ecumenical commitment.
b) To initiate and plan studies concerning the various issues relevant to the search for deeper fellowship.
c) To establish regular contacts between churches and carry out visitations.
d) To assist the churches engaged in union negotiations or interconfessional dialogue.
e) To develop opportunities for a common witness and service to the world".(10)

(30) Becoming more specific about the overall ecumenical commitment, the report said:

"In ecumenical dialogue, as well as in its theological work within the framework of the WCC, the LWF should continue to urge the questions which were raised by the Reformation. For the extension of church fellowship beyond the Lutheran family the only prerequisite should be a basic agreement on the Gospel and the sacraments according to the Scriptures (*satis est*, CA VII)." (11)

(31) There was a call to broaden the ecumenical encounter even further by the inclusion of the Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostalists and Independent Christian movements.

(9) Cf. Evian 1970. Proceedings of the Fifth Assembly of the LWF, Evian 1970, Minneapolis 1971, pp. 71 f.
(10) Ibid. p. 76
(11) Ibid. p. 77

(32) Since 1970, the LWF has pursued with concrete results the dialogues with Roman Catholic, Reformed and Anglican churches. A beginning has been made in relating to Orthodox churches. Progress has been slow in implementing dialogues with the others mentioned at Evian. In addition, the LWF has participated in other ecumenical meetings, notably the conferences of Secretaries of World Confessional Families.

D. SCOPE OF THE TASK

(33) The Committee on the Interrelations between the Various Bilateral Dialogues has sought in its reflections to be guided by the original significance of the word *oikumene*, namely as referring to the whole inhabited world, to mankind as a whole. Because God's work of creation and redemption embraces the whole world, the Church has every cause to interpret the *oikumene* in the widest sense.

(34) As a pilgrim people travelling the roads of the world, the church suffers from the divisions within human society as well as from its own divisions. As the church seeks to express the unity given in Jesus Christ, it is concerned at the same time for the brokenness of humanity and seeks to play its part in the attainment of concord for the whole world. In that perspective the ecumenical movement among the churches can be a witness that benefits all humanity.

(35) The Working Group approached its task with certain basic theological convictions. The Lutheran churches understand their ecumenical efforts to be within the framework of the task for all of Christianity. Although the separations within the one Church of Jesus Christ have basically to do with the truth of Christian faith and with different interpretations of the apostolic witness, they are also related to human sin before God which continually needs forgiveness. This plea for forgiveness is only credible, however, when accompanied by the effort to eliminate divisive factors. In that effort, the following convictions guide us :

(36) 1. In Jesus Christ the grace of God is revealed for the whole world. It exposes the slavery of all humankind to sin and the reality of the divine judgement on sinners and has as goal the freedom and solidarity of the forgiven sinner. This means that the gospel is in essence ecumenical, and ecumenical engagement is a part of the church's mission in the world.

(37) 2. Where the gospel is received in faith a new human community comes into being, under the one Lord, who with word and sacrament constitutes his church. In this one Lord the community of the faithful has its unity. The church is the body of Christ, in which, to be sure, not all the natural and historical differences of nations and human beings are abolished. But in that body everything divisive is overcome and the things which are different in themselves learn to serve each other.

(38) 3. If the division of the Church is nevertheless deplorable, this is because the churches belong at the same time to the old and new world and are faced with the task of realizing what they are because of the gospel and the purpose to which Christ called them. In this task the church frequently experiences failure. It continually must overcome sin in itself, which means here, the sin of discord, of an insufficient understanding of the Gospel, of weakness in overcoming social, racial, ethnic, cultural, historical and individual factors. Yet the task remains. Its fulfilment necessarily belongs to the sanctification of the Christian by the power of the gospel. In His grace, God uses even the failures of the church and turns the variety of divisions to proclaim the gospel. The many churches become expressions of the variety of gifts which must be exercised for a more visible unity of the Church.

(39) 4. At the same time, however, ecumenical efforts are an expression of Christian hope. The dividedness of Christendom is to a significant degree a reflection of an unredeemed world and a sign of the church's deep involvement in that world. Against this background, ecumenical involvement becomes an expression of the hope of the kingdom of God in which controversy and conflict, disregard for one's neighbour, slavery under the law, sin and death have come to an end. Ecumenical endeavours therefore have their deepest basis in the knowledge of the kingdom of God or the new world, which has already come in Jesus Christ but whose fulfilment remains an object of Christian hope.

(40) The working group divided its report into four chapters:

I. Dialogues Past and Present
II. Confessional Fellowship and Christian Unity
III. Ecumenical Methodology
IV. Ecumenical Strategy

(41) Chapter I analyses the dialogues with Roman Catholic, Anglican and Reformed churches in order to see whether the conclusions in each are consistent with the others and in order to measure the amount of agreement that has been reached. After noting for each dialogue what has been done and what is the current status, the analysis compares the theological findings with regard to the Lord's Supper, the Ministry and Justification.

(42) Chapter II explores the nature and problems firstly of Lutheran fellowship and then the ecumenical fellowship from a Lutheran standpoint. Among Lutherans fellowship is based on the Lutheran confessions but new situations have shown the need to be more flexible in applying the fundamental confessional principle. In reference to the wider ecumenical fellowship it is demonstrated that the Lutheran ecumenical effort is mostly guided by a conception of Christian unity in which the confessional heritage and the confessional identity are not abandoned but can be preserved intact.

(43) Chapter III is concerned with ecumenical methodology and here there is emphasis on the value of doctrinal discussions and agreements and the interaction between doctrinal agreement and practical fellowship *(koinonia)* is analysed. But "non-dogmatic" factors must also be taken into account. In the understanding of these factors, the interdisciplinary method, combining theology with the findings of the human sciences, is important.

(44) Chapter IV considers questions of ecumenical strategy. Emphasising in the first place motives and principles of ecumenical commitment, it uses these to demonstrate general objectives for the ecumenical activity of the LWF in the future. Specifically, two concrete tasks will concern it in future: firstly, the reception of previous findings of the dialogue in all the member churches, and secondly, the continuation and extension of the interconfessional dialogue with existing and new partners. In both tasks, suggestions have been made and certain priorities proposed. Finally, there is a description given of the present and future relations of the LWF to the World Council of Churches, to the Conference of Secretaries of the World Confessional Families and to the Lutheran Churches who are non-members of the LWF.

I. DIALOGUES PAST AND PRESENT

(45) A. THE INDIVIDUAL DIALOGUES OF THE LWF

Since 1964, the LWF has been increasingly engaged in interconfessional dialogues. The spectrum of finished and current dialogues includes the following:

1. Conversations with the Roman Catholic Church

Finished Dialogues

(46) a) Joint Working Group. It had two meetings (1965 and 1966). Its task consisted in planning future theological conversations. The final report recommended the formation of two Joint Study Commissions - one on the theme "The Gospel and the Church", the other on questions of marriage and mixed marriage.

(47) b) Joint Lutheran/Roman Catholic Study Commission on "The Gospel and the Church". It had a total of five meetings (1967 - 1971). Its results are contained in the "Malta Report". It attempts above all to resolve controversial theological and ecclesiological questions and to show possibilities for new agreements.

(48) c) Joint Lutheran/Roman Catholic/Reformed Study Commission on "The Theology of Marriage and the Problem of Mixed Marriages". Its work began in 1971 and was concluded at its fifth meeting in April 1976. A special feature of this dialogue was the participation of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Current Dialogue

(49) Joint Working Group. It has had four meetings so far (1973, 1974, 1976, 1977). Its task is twofold: (1) to examine and encourage the reception of the Malta Report in the churches and also think through possibilities for the implementation of church fellowship; (2) to continue the doctrinal conversations especially on the question of the eucharist and the episcopacy.

2. Conversations with the Reformed Church

Finished Dialogues

(50) a) Dialogues between the Lutheran and the Reformed churches in Europe. These were organized by the LWF and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches together with the Secretariat of Faith and Order (WCC).

First Phase : Schauenburg Conversations. These consisted of four meetings (1964 - 1967), which dealt with the clarification of controversial questions.

Second Phase : Leuenberg Conversations. Three meetings were held (1969-1971), which - on the basis of the previous doctrinal conversations in Bad Schauenburg - led to the formulation of the "Leuenberg Agreement" (an inter-church agreement, which makes church fellowship between the Lutheran and the Reformed churches in Europe possible).

(51) b) Joint Committee between the LWF and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, four meetings (1970 - 1973). The purpose of these consultations was practical cooperation and implementation of church fellowship between the Lutheran and the Reformed churches and the role of both world federations in the ecumenical movement.

Current Dialogue

(52) A newly constituted Joint Committee of the LWF and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. One meeting has so far been held (1975). The purpose of this committee is also to hold continuing consultations with a view for practical cooperation and the implementation of church fellowship between Lutheran and Reformed churches. It also places practical emphases upon the theological implications of the Leuenberg Agreement, and the question of the universal council and conciliar fellowship.

3. Dialogue with the Anglican Church

Finished Dialogues

(53) Joint Study Commission between the LWF and the Anglican Communion. This has so far held four meetings (1970-1972). Its results are presented in the "Pullach Report". It indicates agreements and convergences on basic theological and ecclesiological questions and outlines possibilities of a growing fellowship between Anglican and Lutheran churches.

(54) Current Dialogue

The Anglican Consultative Council and the LWF appointed in 1973 a Joint Anglican/Lutheran Working Group in order to evaluate the reactions to the "Pullach Report" and further Anglican/Lutheran relations. The Group held its first meeting in Geneva in December 1975 and its report was presented to the Anglican Consultative Committee and the LWF Executive Committee in 1976.

B. ORIGIN OF THE DIALOGUES

(55) There were very practical reasons for setting up the various dialogues with the above-mentioned three confessions or churches. The dialogues emerged out of situations which were ecumenically challenging for the LWF. The LWF responded to these challenges by embarking on interconfessional dialogues. Thus in a new and active way the LWF has taken seriously its ecumenical commitment and has contributed to the expansion and development of the ecumenical movement.

(56) The Catholic/Lutheran dialogue developed from contacts and associations between the LWF observers at Vatican II and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church. The conviction emerged that these lively and promising contacts should not be broken off or put in cold storage after the Council, but intensified. In all parts of the world, Lutheran Churches live side by side with the Catholic Church. Through polemical delimitations they have mutually influenced each other in their historical development and consequently have a specific mutual responsibility.

(57) The European Lutheran/Reformed conversation originated in the Secretariat of Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. However, it became evident that cooperation between the LWF and the WARC was necessary if the conversation was to make suitable progress and above all if the churches were to participate more actively in it. Thus, in 1963, with participation of both world federations, the conversations were begun anew, and did succeed in including all the European LWF member churches.

(58) The constitution of a joint working group of the LWF and the WARC proved necessary in order that the results of local or regional Lutheran/Reformed dialogues - especially in Europe and North America might bear fruit in other geographical areas on the global level.

(59) Union negotiations between Lutheran churches and those churches in Southern India and Tanzania which have been strongly marked by the Anglican tradition, provided the impulse for dialogue with the Anglican Communion. The problems which emerged in these union negotiations seemed to have immediate implications for the relationship of the negotiating churches to their confessional families. In the interests of a proper clarification of these problems, the LWF decided to engage in dialogue with the Anglican Communion.

C. COMMON FEATURES AND DIFFERENCES OF THE DIALOGUES

Common Features

(60) All of these conversations - with the exception of the dialogue between the LWF, the WARC and the Roman Catholic Church on the "Theology of Marriage and the Problem of Mixed Marriages" - were bilateral.

This was in line not only with the particular motivation of these conversations, but also with the conviction that such bilateral encounters can consider and concentrate on the often very specific questions existing between the individual churches, and can better lead to results which are binding for the churches than is possible with an encounter between a number of very different partners. It has, however, to be kept clearly in mind, that the bilateral and multilateral forms of ecumenical encounter are not competitive but complementary.

(61) The dialogues are official dialogues of the churches. This is not to say that their results would be binding on the churches. However, the dialogue results are designed for reception by the churches, in the expectation that they will be given appropriate and careful attention in an open-minded spirit.

(62) Most of the dialogues are by nature doctrinal conversations. They try to overcome existing theological and ecclesiological divergences and emphasize common interests. Furthermore, those dialogues which put more stress upon the questions of practical cooperation and concrete implementation of church fellowship build upon earlier doctrinal conversations.

Differences

(63) The differences in form between individual dialogues are usually due to the diversity of the partners with which the LWF is engaged. For the same reason, the individual dialogues have progressed to different stages:

(64) Since the very beginning, the relationship of the Lutheran churches to the Roman Catholic Church has been characterized by deep and in some respects growing theological and ecclesiastical divergences and the need for working out new agreements and convergences.

(65) The relationship between the Lutheran and the Reformed churches - particularly in Europe - was marked by a common historical background and by a rapprochement which has been growing for a long time. Therefore, it is understandable that the conversations are already aimed at the implementation of church fellowship.

(66) The Anglican and Lutheran churches have been virtually isolated from each other not least because of historical, political and geographical factors. Therefore, the conversation tried to provide a theological basis for growing altar fellowship and intensified cooperation between the churches.

D. THE LWF'S BILATERAL DIALOGUES IN THE WIDER CONTEXT OF INTERCONFESSIONAL CONVERSATIONS

(67) The bilateral dialogues being held by the LWF with other churches may not be seen in isolation. They are part of a comprehensive network of bilateral dialogues which has been developed in the course of the last few years and which has been continually expanding. The individual dialogues can be

complementary to each other and can have a positive influence on each other, as happens in practice; they can, however, also differ in their development and results, and tensions can arise between them. For this reason, adequate interrelation and coordination present an important task, which needs to be kept in mind.

(68) In our context, special attention must be given to the fact that numerous member churches of the LWF are carrying on or have carried on dialogues with churches of other confessions, only a few of which can be mentioned here. Thus Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogues are taking place in Sweden, Brazil, in the Philippines, and especially in the USA, where considerable results have been achieved. There have been dialogues with Reformed churches in France, Germany, Holland and North America to name a few. Dialogues with Anglican churches have been and are being held, e.g. in Scandinavia, North America, Germany, or - in the framework of multi-lateral union negotiations - in Southern India and East Afrika. In respect of themes and findings, dialogues at the world or regional level are often complementary.

(69) In addition to this, Lutherans should in any case not ignore the interconfessional dialogues taking place between non-Lutheran churches. This applies particularly to dialogues being held between those churches, which are at the same time ecumenical partners of the Lutheran churches. For example, as will appear subsequently in this report, the results of the international discussions between Anglicans and Roman Catholics and between Roman Catholics and Reformed can help to a better interpretation and understanding of the Lutheran dialogue with these churches.

E. THEOLOGICAL FINDINGS OF THE DIALOGUES

(70) The dialogues have treated those subjects whose clarification seemed to be important for the relationship of the Lutheran churches to the particular partner involved. On the whole, they have attempted to overcome traditional divergences through new agreements and convergences. Of course, there are questions, especially in the relationship to the Catholic Church, which have not been considered in the dialogues and which, therefore, need to be clarified. It must also be realized that in no way has the full answer been found to all the questions dealt with in the dialogues. Finally to this must be added the inherent difficulty in most of the statements of consensus, i.e. that they are liable to be interpreted differently by the churches taking part. With all this in mind, not only is a continuation of the dialogues necessary, but also at the same time a comprehensive process of re-examination and verification of results achieved must be carried out within the churches involved.

(71) An important question which is already apparent is whether and to what extent the results of various dialogues dealing with the same subject reveal serious gaps, differences or even contradictions. It is particularly urgent that this question be answered because, to a certain extent, the credibility of the dialogues is at stake here. At the same time the Lutherans must be able to give an account of how the results of the dialogues

relate to the traditional theological convictions of the Lutheran churches. At the present level of the dialogues, special cases in point are the deliberations of the understanding of the eucharist, the ministry and the doctrine of justification.

1. THE LORD'S SUPPER

a) The Malta Report

(72) The Malta Report deals only indirectly with the question of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The question is raised because of the urgent problem of inter-communion (Nos. 68-74). The main point is the unity of the Church in concrete form: fellowship in the celebration of the eucharist constitutes an essential sign of unity of the Church. This is the common basis for the further remarks made.

(73) Three essential attributes of the celebration of the Lord's Supper can not be relinquished (No. 69): the confession of Christ, his eucharistic presence and the fellowship of the church (in dogmatic terms: christology, the doctrine of the Lord's Supper and ecclesiology). Although in the report, the eucharistic presence - unlike the two other characteristics - is not a matter for debate, something on this can be read between the lines of the discussion on the question of inter-communion.

(74) There is strong emphasis on the link between baptism and eucharistic fellowship (Nr. 70). Baptism becomes the "perfect sign of unity" when all those who are invited can take part (No. 71). Consequently, the eucharist serves in the "ministry of reconciliation" as the "acceptance of men through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ" (No. 72). There is no consideration of the further details of this link. This is a result of the predominantly ecclesiological approach and should not be interpreted as implying that the report could not have said anything more about mutual agreement on the Lord's Supper. The starting point for this is obviously present (cf. above on No. 69). This should help the new Mixed Roman Catholic/Lutheran Commission to draft something on the doctrine of the eucharist.

b) The Leuenberg Agreement

(75) The Leuenberg Agreement (=LA) rightly took the doctrine of the Lord's Supper as a matter for debate because its purpose was to surmount the doctrinal debates from the time of the Reformation. The positive, comprehensive statements about the Lord's Supper (Nos. 15-16) should make it possible to overcome the historical condemnations (Nos. 18-19). Methodologically the LA aims primarily at arguing for the disappearance of historic controversies which have blocked the communion fellowship between the churches. Its method is different from the Anglican/Roman Catholic Windsor statement on the Eucharistic doctrine, where in general terms agreement is expressed without giving reasons as to how previous controver-

sies were overcome. The LA follows in its scope the specific Lutheran -Reformed controversy and has its own limitation as to the dogmatic questions which have not been controversial.

(76) The description of the Lord's Supper is expressed by an accord upon following elements as essential for the common affirmation (Nr. 15):

(1) the risen Christ is acting himself; (2) his body and blood are the means by which he shares, (3) through his word of promise, (4) with bread and wine, his presence. Eucharistic presence is thus affirmed as binding together the elements of bread and wine according to the promise of the Lord with his sacrificial self-giving. More closely this event of the eucharistic presence comprises the gifts of (1) the forgiveness of sins, (2) being set free to lead a new life (3) fellowship in the body of Christ and (4) being strengthened for service to all men. The relationship in the history of salvation between the Lord's Supper and the death, resurrection and second coming of Christ is linked with the celebration of the Church in proclamation, confession of faith and joyful expectation (No. 16). The LA does not offer any other explanation of the sacrificial presence than the word of promise and avoids the language of "representation" - theories (as used in the Windsor statement). The scope is the belief in the actual presence penetrating into the life of the celebrating community. Nonetheless, the agreement (especially in No. 18) makes possible (1) a clear consent to the *manducatio indignorum* : the Lord gives himself to all for salvation or for judgement; (2) the link between the eucharistic communion with Christ and the act of eating and drinking (*manducatio oralis*). The common Reformation concern that "communion with Jesus Christ in his body and blood" cannot be separate "from the act of eating and drinking" (No. 19) - and thus cannot be regarded as a merely sacrificial presentation - is shared by the Windsor declaration, when it states "The Lord's words at the last supper ... do not allow us to dissociate the gift of the presence and the act of sacramental eating". (No. 9).

(77) On the basis of these positive agreements upon such essential elements of Eucharistic doctrine the LA considers the historical condemnations between Lutherans and Reformed as at an end (No. 20). The LA considers it possible to overcome the three essential doctrinal differences between the Reformed and the Lutheran view:

Firstly,
with regard to the manner of the presence: for Lutherans the bodily presence has always been fundamental (following on from christology and pneumatology). The LA uses neither "bodily" nor "spiritual" as an adjective but refers to the risen Christ giving himself as a whole. The bodily presence and the oneness of the person of Christ are underlined.

Secondly,

(78) the sacramental presence is directly associated with the elements of bread and wine. But the use of "with" does not entail a weakening of the bodily presence, because in the same sentence the presence is also described as "in" and the Lutheran triad (in, with, under) point not to a dogmatic definition but to maintaining the mystery of the presence. Thus the *manducatio oralis* is guaranteed without a theological description of this affirmation. Although there is a reference to the "act of eating and drinking" (No. 19), this cannot imply that the presence is linked with the eucharistic act as such in its totality but rather with the elements themselves.

Thirdly,

(79) the LA emphasizes the decisive point for the Lutheran understanding, namely that the gift of the presence is offered "unreservedly to all who receive the bread and wine" (No. 18) and therefore comprises the *manducatio impiorum*. The antithesis of receiving with faith or in unbelief, for salvation or for perdition, is intended to express this (No. 18). This sentence was reworded in the final version. It stresses the reference to receiving (not only "bread and wine" as in the previous version but) the Lord's Supper (Mahl) for salvation or for judgement. Thus the Lutheran concern is even more clearly underlined here. As a result of these clarifications the LA recommends the re-establishment of table fellowship (No.33).

c) The Pullach Report

(80) The report of the Anglican/Lutheran conversations (Pullach Report) contains a brief discussion of the Lord's Supper (Nos. 67-69). On the basis of Christ's command and as one of the two sacraments witnessed to by the Scriptures (No. 70), the following description of this action in the church was mutually agreed:

> In the Lord's Supper the church receives (1) the body and blood of Christ, crucified and risen (2) forgiveness of sins and (3) all other benefits of his passion.

(81) The eucharistic presence is defined in greater detail: (1) as "the real presence of Christ", (2) without further specifications of "how"; (3) the link between this presence and the bread and wine which is expressed in the eucharistic action; (4) the remaining of the bread and wine; and finally (5) the presence closely related to communion.

(82) The specific question of the eucharistic sacrifice is given special treatment which includes the following affirmations (No. 69): (1) Christ's sacrifice was offered once and for all; (2) and yet the eucharist "in some sense" involves sacrifice; (3) sacrifice as praise and thanksgiving, as offering oneself and a memorial of Christ's sacrifice, are affirmations made by both sides; (4) however the question of whether the church's offering of itself is caught up into Christ's self-offering is left open.

(83) On the basis of the agreement it is recommended that both churches should grant one another intercommunion, meaning the mutual admission of communicants.

d) Occasion and Purpose

(84) The occasion and purpose of the three documents are different. This explains the difference in emphasis on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The Malta Report was concerned with a particular subject for study and only raised the question of the Lord's Supper in its conclusions. The LA, on the other hand, had set out deliberately to clear up controversies of centuries' standing, including above all the question of the Lord's Supper. There were only limited, historical points of contact with the Anglican Church and the conversations were to help both the churches to go beyond their isolation. They discussed practical possibilities for fellowship.

(85) If the question of the "identity" of the Lutheran partner in the three dialogues is raised, proof can scarcely be provided by a direct comparison of the documents available. But it is possible to look at each dialogue and try to match the views presented by the Lutheran side with their true content within the Lutheran tradition.

(86) The focal point of the event of the Lord's Supper in the Malta Report is the ministry of reconciliation, more closely defined as "reconciling acceptance of men through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ". This places great emphasis on the soteriological aspect. The Lord's Supper is God's gift to mankind to save, to reconcile and to strengthen faith. There is a departure from the traditional form of the concept of the sacrifice of the mass which was criticized by the Reformation. The goal of the Lord's Supper as communion with God's saving action through Christ's death and resurrection is set out clearly as confessed by the Lutheran Reformation.

(87) The LA, for its part, insists firmly on the christological prerequisite of Christ's self-emptying by means of his incarnation and draws the necessary conclusions from this for the doctrine of the Lord's Supper (=*Finitum capax infiniti*). The following affirmation is made: "In the word of the promise and in the sacraments, the Holy Spirit, and so God himself, makes the crucified and risen Jesus present to us" (No. 21). This sentence also puts into words a concrete expression of pneumatology which links the work of the Holy Spirit with bodily presence. The Lutheran tradition itself referred in this sentence to a "spiritual presence" in the Lord's Supper (Form. Conc. SD VII: 105) although this expression is not used in the LA. This gives even stronger emphasis to the Lutheran view of the bodily presence. The assessment of the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper as the means of the presence of Christ is thereby guaranteed. The natural consequences of this are the recognition of the *manducatio oralis* and of the *manducatio indignorum*.

(88) The doctrine of the Lord's Supper presented in the Pullach Report falls within the Lutheran tradition and at many points its wording

(esp. 67-68) is close to that of the LA (15,18 and 19). Yet it could still be questioned whether it was not possible to give even clearer expression to the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper than is the case in the Report (No. 67). In detail, certainly a greater concreteness in the eucharistic action can be noted. This applies to the greater stress on the role of the eucharistic prayer (No. 68 and note). Although the Lutheran tradition was more reserved about this, it has learnt from the ecumenical discussion in recent times. Many Lutheran churches have made up for a gap on this point although the Anglicans' special interest in the concept of the eucharistic sacrifice still had to be left open on the Lutheran side (No. 69).

e) Summary

(89) 1. As has been demonstrated in the above text (24-40), in each of the three dialogues, Lutherans have pursued specific theological questions. Decisive in the choice of the perspectives was the partner as well as the general subject of the dialogue. The most elaborate attempt to overcome historical controversies was made in the LA. The dialogue with the Anglicans has not been burdened by historical controversies and could achieve satisfactory consensus. This resulted in the recommendation of eucharistic fellowship as envisaged also with the Reformed. The Malta Report has by its subject matter been less extensively concerned with the Eucharist. The continuing Working Group has thus seen as one of its main tasks a completion of the discussion and the preparation of an elaborate text on the Eucharist as a common witness of our two churches.

(90) 2. When the results of these three dialogues are examined critically, we can conclude that Lutherans have been bearing witness to their confessional heritage and have adapted it to the present day situation of the ecumenical debate. Thus it could hardly be maintained that any of that heritage has been abandoned. On the contrary, the specific heritage guided the concern of the dialogues. This has even led to the methodologically vulnerable attempt to concentrate on the controversies in history. The problems of the past have thus heavily dominated. Present day ecumenical discussions have broadened the perspective of *status questionis* at the time of the Reformation. All churches are aware that the joining of the Orthodox in the ecumenical dialogue, especially, has opened the horizon beyond Western patterns of thinking.

(91) 3. Whereas one could - in the sense just touched upon - wish that the involvement of Lutherans in different dialogues should open up new avenues in Eucharistic thinking, one must remember the following: Lutherans carry on dialogues with different partners and each of them are in their turn in dialogue with other traditions. While one may miss certain traditional questions of the Lutheran tradition in the dialogues in which we are involved, many of these points have been discussed by our partners in other dialogues. Thus the Reformed are in the process of dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. There they deal with the Eucharist as the place of Christ's presence. Certain aspects of that dialogue may make clear points missed in the LA.

A similar case is also found in the regional Swiss dialogue, where the Reformed have elaborated a rich Eucharistic doctrine with the Catholics. (see: *Für ein gemeinsames eucharistisches Zeugnis der Kirchen. Arbeitsdokument der ökumenischen Gesprächskommission der Schweiz*, 1973). Such observations might balance the relative brevity of the LA and answer questions which the Lutheran tradition may raise. This corresponds to the nature of the matter. The purpose of bilateral dialogues is not intended to produce a comprehensive treatment of all subjects but progress towards practical, bilateral clarification in each case. Thus it would be possible to assemble more extensive material for the ecumenical discussions as a whole, for example, than from the three bilateral dialogues of world Lutheranism. But this is by no means proof of the poverty of our own bilateral conversations; for world Lutheranism is itself involved in the other conversations and makes its richer contribution in other contexts in the appropriate way. Such involvement might turn to an enrichment of our specific confessional traditions. In the final analysis the joint efforts of all the bilateral dialogues have to contribute to the entire ecumenical dialogue. Clearing up historical differences might be necessary and helpful. Encounter in dialogue is a demanding confrontation with the questions that are essential for the future. The past Eucharistic controversy is sometimes difficult to interpret in the present situation of the churches. Therefore an honest facing up to the problem of the Eucharist in the context of the present secularized world might transcend the historic burden of theological problems we carry with us. In this sense, the bilateral dialogues are, in respect to the Eucharist, a preparation for the day when the church, assembled at the common table, may find new initiatives for the mission of mankind.

2. THE MINISTRY

a) Role and Place of the Ministry in the Three Reports

(92) In the Malta Report and the Pullach Report the questions of the ordained ministry and the aspects associated with it (e.g. apostolic succession, ordination, episcopacy, mutual recognition) occupy a rather important place. This is explained by the fact that the ministry has been and is still a major controversial point between the dialogue partners. On the Roman Catholic and Anglican side (on the latter side, of course, with different opinions according to "church-manship") there exists in fact a non-recognition of Lutheran ministries with a number of consequences. Therefore, the aim of the dialogue in this area is to prepare the way for mutual recognition.

(93) In the Leuenberger Agreement the question of the ministry is practically absent since it has not belonged to those convictions which were regarded as church-dividing. Yet, since the LA is not limited to former church-dividing issues, some commentators have criticized the omission of a paragraph on the ministry. This they regard as an indication of the fact that the drafters of the LA did not see the ministry as an essential point which should be part of such an

agreement. In a way the ministry question is, nevertheless, included in the whole Leuenberger process by the provision that in the continuing doctrinal conversations "ministry and ordination" will be one of the main topics (39).

(94) A comparison concerning statements on the ministry is therefore only possible between the Malta Report and the Pullach Report. At some point short references to the Anglican/Catholic Canterbury Statement and to the Lutheran/Catholic (USA) Report on "Eucharist and Ministry" will be added.

b) The Theological Context of Dealing with the Ministry

(95) The Malta Report and the Pullach Report are similar in so far as they form a coherent text which incorporates a number of main issues. They are not dealing with isolated items. Accordingly, in the Pullach Report the discussion on the ministry is then approached through the issue of apostolicity and apostolic succession. The Malta Report is more limited in the number of topics, but by emphasizing the gospel as the decisive criterium for all other questions it is able to interrelate its selected topics even more thoroughly than the Pullach Report. Accordingly the question of the ministry is approached and discussed in the perspective of the preceding affirmations about the gospel. Regarding the question of the ministry via apostolicity or via gospel - these are legitimate alternatives which, at a closer look, reveal themselves as two sides of the same coin. The approach in the Malta Report is more in the line with traditional Lutheran thinking.

c) Common Aspects of the Ministry in the Pullach Report and the Malta Report

(96) The paragraphs on the ministry in the two reports do not seek to present a full and detailed presentation of the topic. They focus on controversial aspects in the context of basic convictions and presuppositions. Certain aspects are taken up in both reports, others are discussed only in one or the other of the two reports. First, the parallel treatment of identical aspects will be presented here.

aa) Foundation or Institution of the Special/Ordained Ministry

(97) The Malta Report links the foundation of ministry to the gospel because the "witness of the gospel requires that there be witnesses to the gospel" (48). In a second line of argument the emergence of a special ministry in NT times is connected with the apostles as the foundation of the church and the charisms which are given to the whole church (51-54). The Pullach Report stresses more this second line of thought, combining the theological and historical in one single sentence: the ministry "was instituted by God through Jesus Christ in the sending of the apostles" (75). Both reports understand

this ministry primarily as a ministry of Word and Sacrament. They describe its institution and exercise in close interrelation with the service of the whole People of God.

The different approaches can be regarded as complementary.

Note: The Canterbury Statement and the USA Report on "Eucharist and Ministry" contain no statements which contradict these approaches.

bb) Apostolic Succession

(98) The Malta Report and the Pullach Report take a similar starting-point: apostolic succession is primarily expressed through the apostolicity of the whole church, being faithful to the apostolic witness. The dynamic, comprehensive character of this apostolic succession of the whole church and the variety of means for its expression and preservation through time is stressed in the Pullach Report (73-75), while the Malta Report argues more historically (57 and 58). The special role of ministerial succession in this context is seen by Catholics as a "sign of the unimpaired transmission of the gospel and a sign of unity in the faith". Lutherans are reported as granting the importance of such a succession if succession in teaching remains preeminent and succession in ministry is not regarded as "an *ipso facto* certain guarantee of the continuity of the right proclamation of the gospel" (57).

(99) The Pullach Report sees in the use of a ministry of Word and Sacraments, of pastoral care and oversight one of the several means through which the "succession of apostolicity through time is guarded and given contemporary expression" (74).

While both reports have not specified the kind of ministry which forms part of the apostolic succession, the Pullach Report adds an important statement by saying that all who have been called and ordained to the ministry in obedience to the apostolic faith "stand together in the succession of office" (77).

(100) In their own statement in the Pullach Report, Anglicans underline the common affirmations by denying that "the episcopate in historic succession alone constitutes the apostolic succession of the Church or its ministry" (85), yet at the same time asserting that episcopacy in historic succession is "an outward and visible sign of the Church's continuing unity and apostolic life, mission, and ministry" (84).

Anglican reactions to the Pullach Report indicate, however, that this assertion of the historic episcopate still remains a problem for further Anglican/Lutheran discussion. In a similar direction, though as yet not as positive, points the paragraph in the Malta Report which mentions the fact of some ordinations of priests in the Catholic tradition, but leaves it to further discussion whether this has relevance for the possibility of a presbyterial succession (58).

(101) Despite differences in presentation a similar position is expressed both in the Malta Report and the Pullach Report.

Note: In the Canterbury Statement and the USA Report "Eucharist and Ministry", a similar concept of apostolicity and apostolic succession is apparent, although in the Canterbury Statement the role of episcopal succession is expressed in somewhat stronger terms ("ensure", "symbolise", "maintain").

cc) Ordination

(102) Since both reports do not offer a full description of ordination, each of them mentions elements which are lacking in the other. The Pullach Report stresses God's action in ordination through the whole church, the authority given through ordination, prayer and laying on of hands and the special ministers of ordination (78). The Malta Report deals with the sacramental character of ordination (in the same way as the USA Report)and mentions laying on of hands and invocation of the Holy Spirit (59). It also points to the fact that both churches do not repeat ordination (60). These statements are complementary.

Note: The USA Report "Eucharist and Ministry" and the Canterbury Statement offer a fuller exposition of ordination, whereby in the latter episcopal ordination is taken for granted. As far as a comparison is at all possible, contradiction cannot be detected.

dd) Mutual Recognition

(103) In the Pullach Report, the recognition of Lutheran ministries as a truly apostolic ministry is justified by the Anglican delegates in pointing to the fact, "that they see in the Lutheran Communion true proclamation of the Word and celebration of the Sacraments" and that the "Anglican Communion has been much influenced and blessed by God through the Lutheran Communion's faithfulness to the apostolic Gospel". As a consequence they "gladly recognize in the Lutheran church a true communion of Christ's Body, possessing a truly apostolic ministry" (85). Two further consequences are drawn by the Anglican delegates: 1) Such recognition, if reciprocal, would allow for some form of official intercommunion (86). 2) Full integration of ministries would not be possible apart from the historic episcopate (87). At this second point a difference to the Lutheran position is still apparent.

(104) In a similar way the Lutheran participants base their recognition of Anglican ministries on the ecclesiological argument; because they see in the churches of the Anglican Communion true proclamation of the gospel and right administration of the sacraments, they are able to recognize these churches "as true apostolic churches and their ministry as an apostolic ministry in unbroken succession" (90). As a consequence they point to intercommunion and, where expedient, to exchange of ministers or full church union (91).

(105) Because of the different background, mentioned above, the Malta Report argues more cautiously. Catholic participants request their authorities to examine the question of the recognition of Lutheran ministries. They base this request on the recognition of the ecclesial character of non-Roman Catholic churches by Vatican II, the emergency situation of the Reformation period, considerations of the charismatic origin of ministries and of the possibility of a presbyterial succession (63).

(106) Lutheran participants point to the fact that on the basis of their main criteria - true proclamation of the Gospel and right administration of the sacraments - they have never "denied the existence of the office of the ministry in the Roman Catholic Church". They stress, however, that in view of recent changes in the Roman Catholic understanding and practice of the ministry and other convergencies the Lutheran Church should seriously examine the question of an explicit recognition of the Roman Catholic ministerial office (64).

(107) Both reports are looking towards mutual recognition of ministries. They do this, however, in a different manner which has its reason in the different histories and the different doctrinal positions which lay behind these two dialogues. Nevertheless, the approach in the Pullach Report seems to be preferable since both parties base mutual recognition on the same, common presuppositions. The Catholic argument in the Malta Report for recognition, on the other hand, is partly based on considerations (emergency situation, etc.) which are not necessarily shared by Lutherans.

(108) Note : The Canterbury Statement does not take up the question of recognition. The USA Report requests similarly to the Malta Report serious consideration of mutual recognition. As in the Malta Report and the Pullach Report, it bases this request on ecclesiological recognition, whereby for the Lutherans again true proclamation of the Gospel and right administration of the sacraments are the decisive criteria.

d) Distinct Aspects in the Two Reports

(109) Each of the two reports takes up aspects of the ministry which are not dealt with or only touched on in the other report. The fact that in neither is a full treatment of the question of the ministry given and that in both the particular "constellation" of the two partners required a concentration on particular points was certainly the reason for this.

(110) Such aspects are e.g. in the Malta Report: Relationship between ordained ministry and community (50) (similar in the Canterbury Statement and the USA Report); the emergence of the ministry and minis-

terial structures in the NT and in post-apostolic times (52-56) (similar in the Canterbury Statement and the USA Report); the priestly character of the ministry (60) (the Canterbury Statement is more positive about the priestly aspects of the ministry). The distinct aspect in the Pullach Report is a rather heavy concentration on the question of episcopacy (79-90). (With regard to the element of *episcopē* there are strong similarities between the Malta Report and the Canterbury Statement).

e) Summary

(111)

1. In general one could say that in the different reports a basically consistent Lutheran position can be observed.

2. There are no contradictions, but differences of approach, selection of aspects and emphases in the Pullach Report, the Malta Report and the USA Report, while the Canterbury Statement contains statements which should be evaluated and compared in more detail with the USA Report, but also here similarities are stronger than differences.

3. The Lutheran position as it is reflected in these reports is certainly in continuity with basic Reformation convictions. Yet in addition to this, there have emerged questions like apostolic succession, *episcopē* and episcopate, and priestly character of the ministry where Lutherans are confronted with theological considerations which have so far occupied no prominent place in their theological tradition.

3. JUSTIFICATION

(112) The question of the treatment of the doctrine of justification in the dialogues must be considered according to Lutheran thinking from two points of view which must be distinguished but not separated. On the one hand, the doctrine of justification constitutes one specific article of the Lutheran confession and, on the other hand, the doctrine of justification is the *praecipuus locus doctrinae christianae*, i.e. the full theological expression of the gospel and the centre which informs all of the church's proclamation and teaching. Looked at from the second point of view, the doctrine of justification is of central and fundamental importance for all the ecumenical endeavours of Lutheran churches: "If this one item (i.e. the article about justification) is kept unsullied in the field, then Christendom will also remain unsullied and healthy, united and free from all divisions; for it is this item alone and nothing else, which makes and preserves Christendom" (Luther).

a) The Question of the Doctrine of Justification discussed in the Dialogues

(113) During the first stage of the Lutheran/Reformed Dialogues in Europe (the Bad Schauenburg Conversations), that is, during the doctrinal conversations proper, the doctrine of justification was not an item on the agenda. The reason for this is obvious: on this there was and is no profound Lutheran/Reformed disagreement. The situation was quite different in the second stage of the conversations and in the Leuenberger Agreement. Here the joint statements about justification suddenly become the central item (LA 6-12). The reason for this lies in a shift in the objectives of the conversations. It is no longer a matter of resolving questions of controversy but of establishing church fellowship. Hence the doctrine of justification is given the central and fundamental importance which it deserves according to Reformation conviction: the common understanding of the gospel as the message of justification provides the firm foundation for church fellowship (cf. LA 29).

(114) Nor was the question of justification dealt with explicitly in the Anglican/Lutheran dialogue, since there too the doctrine of justification as such is not controversial (cf. 39 Articles, XI). But it can be expected, and the Lutheran side will have to insist on this, that in any possible second stage of the Anglican/Lutheran conversations which is concerned with the establishment of church fellowship it would play a central part. Indications that this will happen, can be found in the personal note by the Lutheran chairman: as the conversations continue, "the commitment to the gospel also needs further exploration. Although the present conversations affirm the importance of justification and forgiveness of sins, future conversations should say more clearly and fully that the gospel proclaims the unmerited grace, whereby God declares men righteous through faith in Jesus Christ" (Pullach Report).

(115) In contrast with the conversations with the Reformed churches and the Anglicans, the question of the doctrine of justification was of great significance in the Catholic/Lutheran dialogue from the very beginning. This was due to the fact that, according to the Reformation view, this was the key point of controversy with the church of Rome. Therefore, this problem was discussed at the very first meeting of the Roman Catholic/Lutheran Study Commission (cf. Malta Report, Nos. 26-30). Moreover, as must still be proved, the doctrine of justification continued to be discussed in the later stages of the dialogue.

b) Specific Statements about the Doctrine of Justification

(116) The LA devotes several paragraphs to the doctrine of justification in which the doctrine of justification is described in a condensed way as the expression of the true understanding of the gospel but at the same time so exhaustively that its exposition has met with general approval (Nos. 6-12). Reference is made to: the christological dimension (No. 9), the role of the word and of the Holy Spirit, the

importance of faith (*fiducia*), justification as a forensic event, the *propter Christum*, justification as an act of grace, the liberation from the accusation of the law, the question of the conversion and renewal or new life of the person justified, the praise of God and being set free for service to one's neighbour and in the world (Nos. 10-11).

(117) The statements in the Malta Report (No. 26) are not in tension nor even in contradiction with this. But they are felt by many to be not yet sufficient. The claim of the Malta Report, that on this key point of Lutheran/Roman Catholic controversy "today ... a far-reaching consensus is developing", does not seem to be borne out by the remarks which follow. In fact, the Malta Report spells out this consensus only in two extremely compact statements in which Catholics and Lutherans respond to the main criticisms which they had levelled against one another over the question of justification.

(118) The answer from the Catholic side to the Reformation accusation of "justification by works" is: "Catholic theologians also emphasize in reference to justification that God's gift of salvation for the believer is unconditional as far as human accomplishments are concerned"(No. 26).

(119) To the Catholic accusation that justification is reduced by the Reformation churches to a purely external declaration of a man's justification without any internal renewal, the Lutheran side responds: "Lutheran theologians emphasize that the event of justification is not limited to individual forgiveness of sins, and they do not see in it a purely external declaration of the justification of the sinner. Rather the righteousness of God actualized in the Christ event is conveyed to the sinner through the message of justification as an encompassing reality basic to the new life of the believer" (Ibid).

(120) Thus each side declares that it accepts the positive intentions of the criticism levelled against it and is therefore not or no longer subject to this criticism.

(121) It must be admitted that these statements are abbreviations which only deal with the most basic aspects of the controversy. The reason for this was that the members of the Study Commission shared the conviction that they could rely here on modern theological and ecumenical research which has worked out a far-reaching consensus on the meaning of justification. They thought that they could simply note this consensus without spelling it out and repeating it.

(122) And yet one can claim that, despite their brevity, the statements in the Malta Report at least refer to the essential points at issue in the anyway complex Lutheran/Catholic controversy over the doctrine of justification: there are references to faith, to the unconditional nature of the gift of salvation, i.e. to justification as an act of grace and thus implicitly to the question of the merit of man's works. Mention is made of a "purely external declaration of the justi-

fication of the sinner" and of the "new life of the believer" and thus of the question of a forensic understanding of justification, the genuine renewal of the believer and, again implicitly, the question of the continuing sinfulness of the person justified.

(123) Thus the Malta Report does not say anything wrong at this point. But what it does say needs further explanation and development, so that the "far reaching consensus" is more fully expressed. It will not be particularly difficult, at the right moment in the continuing Lutheran/Catholic dialogue, to undertake this development of the consensus which exists. In the process the above key terms of the traditional controversy will have to be tackled and use made of the results of modern research in order to spell out in more detail in what way in practice a "far-reaching consensus is developing".

c) The Position or Status of the Doctrine of Justification

(124) As stated at the beginning, according to Lutheran conviction, the doctrine of justification is not merely one dogma among others but both the full theological expression of the message of salvation and the centre which informs the church's proclamation and teaching. Interconfessional dialogue about justification has therefore also to concern itself with the question of the position or status of the doctrine of justification.

(125) In the Lutheran/Reformed dialogue the central position of the doctrine of justification was jointly acknowledged. This is evidenced firstly by the fact that the joint statements about justification constitute the central part of the LA. But it is also demonstrated by explicit statements in the LA, such as, for example, that the doctrine of justification points to "the heart of the Scriptures" and that "the message of justification as the message of God's free grace is the measure of all the church's preaching (No. 12).

(126) In the Lutheran/Catholic conversation about justification special emphasis was placed on this question of the position or status of the message of justification and of the doctrine of justification. The Malta Report could create the impression (in No. 28) that this question had been left open and therefore controversial. But this would be inaccurate; the preceding paragraph of the Malta Report (No. 27) in fact shows clearly that a considerable degree of agreement was reached on this question as well. This agreement can be summarised approximately in the following terms: the message of justification does not occupy an exclusive place in so far as it corresponded originally to a situation of witness with clearly defined limits and the saving event is also expressed in the New Testament in ways other than in the terms of the doctrine of justification (e.g. as "reconciliation", "freedom", "new creation"). Nevertheless, it can "be understood as expressing the totality of the event of salvation" and cannot simply be used interchangeably with other theological insights. Although it is not the, it certainly is an "important interpretation of the centre of the gospel" which must be articulated in the church ever anew, precisely wherever the danger of legalism recurs which was the original object

of its protest. It is therefore seen as indispensable as the "foundation of Christian freedom" in opposition to all types of legalism.

(127) It is significant that the comments in the Malta Report about the doctrine of justification lead straight on to ecclesiology (Nos. 29,30 32) and thus clearly demonstrate the significance of the doctrine of justification for the doctrine of the church. In the treatment of the question of the ministry this becomes still more clear. "It is here (i.e. over the question of the church's ministry) that the question of the position of the gospel in and over the church becomes concrete. What, in other words, are the consequences of the doctrine of justification for the understanding of the ministerial office?" (No. 47). That this aspect was taken into account as the discussion of the ministry proceeded, is evidenced by each of the points at which the precedence of the gospel over the church and the ministry is emphasized (Nos. 48,50,60,62 and 66; cf. also 64). Thus it is evident that the far-reaching consensus about the doctrine of justification does not only apply to the doctrine of justification as an isolated dogma but also affects the question of its position and status within the total context of the church's teaching and proclamation.

d) Summary

(128) 1. Depending on whether the question of justification was a relevant point of theological controversy with the different partners in the dialogue, it was dealt with in the conversations at different points in time.

(129) 2. In the Lutheran/Reformed dialogue there was a detailed discussion of justification as the expression of a common understanding of the gospel and as the basis for the establishment of church fellowship; the Lutheran/Catholic dialogue looked at it as one of the key questions of the traditional controversy.

(130) 3. Whereas the Lutheran/Reformed dialogue (LA) provides a condensed but nevertheless exhaustive exposition of the common understanding of the message of justification, the Catholic/Lutheran dialogue (Malta Report) restricted itself to answering the main accusations levelled by Lutherans and Catholics against one another over the question of justification. The basis for this restraint was found in the conviction that modern theological and ecumenical research had already achieved a far-reaching Catholic/Lutheran consensus on the understanding of justification, so that the Study Commission itself considered it adequate simply to note this consensus without repeating it or spelling it out further.

(131) 4. There are no contradictions between the statements of the LA and those of the Malta Report. However, because of the brevity of the statements in the Malta Report much is left unsaid, so that the "far-reaching consensus" on the question of justification,

which is noted, inevitably appears not to be borne out completely by the statements in the Report. For the continuation of the conversations it seems important that this consensus be spelled out and substantiated in greater detail. Another important question for investigation is that of the relationship between the Tridentine doctrine of justification and the anathematas pronounced by the Council, on the one hand, and the consensus which is now discerned, on the other.

(132) 5) The dialogues make it clear that, for Lutheran thinking, the doctrine of justification cannot just be treated as a dogma in isolation; it constitutes the centre which informs the church's proclamation and teaching. The Lutheran/Reformed dialogue reaches full agreement on this. The Lutheran/Catholic dialogue indicates a notable advance at this point as well - explicitly and implicitly.

II. CONFESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

(133) The purpose of the Lutheran Reformation was to recover for the whole of Christendom the evangelical message in all its purity. If the Lutheran churches do not regard the convictions entrusted to them as a possession to keep to themselves but attest and proclaim them to Christendom and to the world, this is a matter of being faithful to their Reformation origins. As confessional churches, the Lutheran churches are by nature and origin confessing churches.

(134) Confessional identity and fellowship are therefore, on this understanding, inseparable from ecumenical commitment and Christian unity. The effort to continue and develop the Lutheran heritage and to cultivate fellowship among Lutherans throughout history can and should be accompanied by the effort to achieve the visible unity of the Church of Jesus Christ. This conviction is a characteristic of Lutheranism past and present. It also determines the work of the Lutheran World Federation, whose tasks include the responsibility both "to cultivate unity of faith and confession of the Lutheran churches of the world" and "to foster Lutheran interest in, concern for and participation in ecumenical movements and to strengthen their responsibility for these".(1)

A. LUTHERAN FELLOWSHIP

(135) Lutheran churches consider themselves part of the one, holy, catholic Church. The apostolic witness is the basis of their life and proclamation and they use the creeds of the ancient Church to confess their own faith. At the same time, however, they constitute a distinctive fellowship of churches, united by common confessions and a common history. The LWF is an organized instrument and an expression of this fellowship, transcending the boundaries of countries, nations and languages, in which they strengthen, support and correct one another.

(136) The overwhelming majority of the churches associated together in the LWF are in full church fellowship with one another (pulpit and altar fellowship). Just as the unity of the Church requires agreement in the pure preaching of the Gospel and in the right administration of the sacraments (CA VII), so too the unity of the fellowship of Lutheran churches one with another also rests on such an agreement, expressing a common commitment to the ancient creeds of the Church and the confessional documents of the Lutheran Reformation (cf. the Doctrinal Basis of the LWF).

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(1) LWF Constitution III.

(137) The fellowship of Lutheran churches, however, does not yet include all the Lutheran churches throughout the world. Even the already existing unity can be endangered by new developments. Lutheran unity, therefore, is not something static but, even where it already exists, is always a task to which the LWF knows itself committed.

1. The Doctrinal Basis of Lutheran Fellowship

(138) To speak of a fellowship or unity of Lutheran churches is only possible because there is something in the nature of a specific "identity" common to these churches, which enables them to recognize each other as Lutheran (2). The specific features distinctive of the life and work of Lutheran churches are found in various contexts: in catechetical instruction (catechisms), in patterns of worship (liturgies, hymn books), in church structures (form of ministry and church leadership), in the spiritual life, in ethos, and so on. But they emerge with particular clarity in the common and committed formulation of the Christian convictions of Lutheran churches in face of specific challenges. In defining Lutheran identity and in seeking to achieve or maintain Lutheran fellowship, therefore, it is important to refer in the first place to the binding confessions of the Lutheran churches.

(139) Lutheran identity and Lutheran fellowship cannot, however, be defined always and for ever simply by reference to the letter of the traditional confessions, nor be based exclusively on formal acceptance of these confessions. This is a necessary consequence of the historical and contingent character of the traditional confessions and of the need to confess the faith afresh in new intellectual, cultural and missionary situations, as well as of the fact that there can be and are Lutheran Churches without these confessions.

(140) This had led in recent times, when the question of defining the Lutheran character of a church has been raised and efforts made to establish fellowship among Lutheran confession. This idea has proved helpful because it makes it possible to preserve and emphasise the continuity with the historic confessional documents and, at the same time, to prevent the understanding and use of these documents as a legalistic standard. It points to something which, while appearing in the Lutheran confessions, is not simply identical with their formulations and literal content. To maintain "substantial agreement" with the Lutheran confession in faith, confession and proclamation means, therefore, gratefully to endorse the historical form of this confession while at the same time using it in Christian freedom for witnessing and confessing responsibly in the historical context in which God has placed us.

(2) An attempt to describe the theological elements in the Lutheran identity was undertaken by the Strasbourg Institute for Ecumenical Research; see *Basic Theological Elements as Essential Components of Lutheran Identity*. The Study Department of the LWF has been investigating the more inclusive theme: *The Church's Identity and its Service of the Whole Human Being*.

(141) Although "substantial agreement" with the Lutheran confessions can be formulated, it cannot nevertheless be a matter of establishing the "substance" of the Lutheran confession in a new set of statements to be used to determine the extent to which this "substantial agreement" exists. The decision as to whether a church is in "substantial agreement" with the Lutheran confession and is, therefore, to be recognized as Lutheran and as belonging to the Lutheran fellowship, is a theological and spiritual decision to be taken by the fellowship of the Lutheran churches. The role of the historical confessional documents here is that of a theological introduction, not that of a legalistic norm.

2) Lutheran Churches with a Distinctive Confession

(142) There are some churches which, because of their history and Christian convictions, regard themselves as Lutheran churches even though they have not adopted the historical Lutheran confessional documents or believe they cannot do so. The LWF seeks contacts with these churches too and remains ready in principle to accept them as members of its fellowship. Thus, for example, a number of Indonesian churches have been received as members of the LWF since 1952 (2nd Assembly of the LWF in Hanover). Though not having the Augsburg Confession as their official confession, these churches nevertheless desired to belong to the LWF, i.e. to a fellowship of Churches which regard the Augsburg Confession as an essential element in their doctrinal basis. The grounds for welcoming such churches as members of the LWF were that their life had long been nourished on the Lutheran tradition (e.g. the use of Luther's Small Catechism in the life of the Church) and that their own church confession was in "substantial agreement" with the Lutheran confessional documents. The LWF believes it must continue to proceed in this way in the future.

3) Lutheran Churches which unite with Non-Lutheran Churches

(143) The church union negotiations in which Lutheran churches are involved, especially in South India and East Africa, presented the LWF as long ago as the 4th Assembly in Helsinki in 1963 with the question of its relationship "to a church which arises from the union of a member church with one or several non-member churches"(3). This question received an official answer in the "statement concerning the attitude of the LWF to churches in union negotiations" (Fifth LWF Assembly in Evian, 1970). It was stated here that "A member church's becoming part of a united church should not lead to a break in relationships with the LWF if the united church's confessional statement is in substantial agreement with the doctrinal basis of the LWF". This makes it possible in principle even for a united church to enter or remain in the fellowship of the LWF.

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(3) Third All-African Lutheran Conference, 1965.

(144) In respect of those united churches which have, or have had, Lutheran constituencies, but which do not become members of the LWF, and also of Lutheran congregations within united churches, the statement confirms the previous practice of the LWF: These churches "may be invited to send official visitors to LWF assemblies. Representatives of these churches may also take part in commissions, national committees and other meetings under LWF sponsorship as consultants or, under certain circumstances, as full members of commissions".

4) The Question of "Dual Membership"

(145) It is in this context that the question of "dual membership" arises. Can a church which is a member of the LWF be, at the same time, a member of another confessional family? No official answer has yet been given to this question by the LWF. There are, however, decisions taken by the LWF which point in the direction of a positive answer. In 1955, for example, the Pomeranian Church (today the Evangelical Church of Greifswald) joined the LWF, although at the time a member and remaining a member of the Evangelical Church of the Old Prussion Union (today the Evangelical Church of the Union). So too, the reception of the Church of the Moravian Brethren in South Africa, which considers itself Lutheran in virtue of its confessional position (Augsburg Confession, Luther's Small Catechism), as a member of the LWF in 1975 was not vetoed on the ground that it also belongs to the Unitas Fratrum. The principle of a "dual membership" seems not to be excluded, therefore. In each case, a decision is taken in the light of the character and confessional position of the Christian family in question, this being considered fundamental. The "statement concerning the attitude of the LWF to churches in union negotiations" points in the same direction when it states that "at the same time, it should be recognized that a united church may desire a relationship with more than one confessional family. The LWF is willing to appoint representatives to discuss inter-church relationships with representatives from uniting churches and from their confessional family organizations".

5) Relationships with Lutheran Churches which are not Members of the LWF

(146) There are still some Lutheran churches, which, while having the traditional Lutheran confessions as their official confession of faith, have not yet entered the fellowship of the Lutheran churches in its organized form in the LWF. Ethnic and national traditions as well as differences which are social and cultural in origin, play a part here. Different views of the confessional documents and their significance within the Church have proved particularly important here. Different views are held as to the number of binding confessional documents, the meaning of loyalty to the confession, and on the question of whether the gospel of God's saving work in Christ or the Bible and all its statements is the final valid confessional standard. There are also differing views in Lutheranism concerning recent ecumenical directions or decisions.

(147) While the LWF and its member churches do not regard these differences as unimportant, they believe that they should not hinder the fellowship of Lutheran churches. Common assent to the fundamental purposes of the Lutheran Reformation, as expressed in the confessional documents, and the agreement this fosters in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments should - in accordance with CA VII - provide an adequate and viable basis for the fellowship of all Lutheran churches. Accordingly, the LWF has consistently sought to improve its relationships with all those Lutheran churches which have so far not become members. In its activities and decisions, it has always tried to listen to the views of these churches and stressed its desire and constant readiness to receive them into the fellowship.

B. ECUMENICAL FELLOWSHIP

(148) Just as the Lutheran churches regard themselves as part of the one catholic Church, so too they recognize other churches as also part of the Church of Jesus Christ. On the basis of this conviction, many Lutheran churches have joined the WCC. They regard the Basis of the WCC(4) as the platform for a conciliar fellowship among the member churches of the WCC, inviting these churches to enter into a growing fellowship with one another and at the same time to witness and serve together in the world.

(149) There have always been two tendencies within the ecumenical movement, of course: The one aims at a unity in which the traditional confessional identities are transcended and left behind, giving place to a new, all-inclusive identity. The model of unity striven for here is that of "organic union". Churches of different confessional traditions and styles in a given locality or country unite in such a way that they surrender their previous confessional identity in order to constitute a new church with new norms and a new identity. Particular emphasis is placed on the "necessity for faithfulness to the calling of the Church to be the sign, instrument and foretaste of Christ's purpose to draw all people to himself". The other tendency seeks an ecumenical fellowship in which each confessional heritage and confessional identity is still maintained; the emphasis here is on "faithfulness to the truth as it has been confessed in the past and as it is embodied in the received traditions". (5)

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(4) "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit".

(5) *Breaking Barriers*, Nairobi 1975, Section II, par. 14.

(150) As a rule, the Lutheran churches have taken the latter direction in their ecumenical endeavours. It has been their conviction that confessional identity and ecumenical fellowship, properly understood, are not obstacles to each other but can be combined. The intention has not been to reject efforts to achieve transconfessional forms of Christian unity, as for example in local union negotiations (6). Such ecumenical efforts are also legitimate. They cannot claim, however, to be the only authentic form of ecumenical endeavour.

(151) A good deal of evidence suggests that, today, the conviction that confessional identity and ecumenical fellowship can be combined has grown stronger and gained in credibility. Various insights and developments have contributed to this. The conviction that the unity we seek cannot be monolithic but can and should embrace the plurality and diversity of Christian confessions and church government has become stronger (7). Fresh emphasis has been placed on the "universal", i.e. the transregional and transnational dimension of Christian unity, which is realized, in part at least, in the world confessional families (8). In recent times, the confessional world bodies, including the Roman Catholic Church, have carried out their ecumenical obligations in a new and vigorous way (bilateral conversations) and by doing so have shown clearly that for them the time of confessional exclusivity is over.

(152) These insights and developments encourage an understanding of unity which also allows room for the diversity of confessional traditions and the existence of church fellowships to cherish these traditions.

(153) In a discussion paper on "The Ecumenical Role of the World Confessional Families in the One Ecumenical Movement" (December 1974) representatives of the World Confessional Families reflected on and developed - in a provisional form at least - a corresponding concept of Christian unity, which they described as a "reconciled diversity". In this study, expression would be given to the abiding value of the confessional forms of Christian faith in all their variety but also to the fact that this diversity, when related to the central message of salvation and Christian faith, far from endangering this centre actually loses its divisive character and can be reconciled into a binding ecumenical fellowship in which even the Confessional Families have an essential role to play (9). This concept of a "reconciled diversity" - which can be applied in principle even to confessionally compact churches (as e.g. the Lutheran churches themselves), since each church has to face the problem of plurality and diversity within itself - is not altogether new. It picks up and develops what already used to be said about an ecumenical fellowship which preserves and integrates confessional traditions within itself in all their distinctiveness and diversity.

(6) See 1970 LWF Statement on its Attitude to Churches engaged in Union Negotiations.

(7) See Uppsala 1968, Sec.I, paras 12 & 13; Nairobi 1975, Sec.II, Paras 2 & 4.

(8) See Uppsala 1968, Sec.I, paras 18 & 19.

(9) Par. 30 of this paper states:"We consider the variety of denominational heritages legitimate insofar as the truth of the one faith explicates itself in history in a variety of expression ... Confessional loyalty and ecumenical commitment are no contradiction, but are one, paradoxical as it may seem. When existing differences between churches lose their divisive character, a vision of unity emerges which has the character of a 'reconciled diversity'."

(154) It is not claimed that the concept of "reconciled diversity" itself provides a detailed and final description of the goal of our striving for the unity of the Church. Nor could it be said that, at this present juncture when various concepts of unity are being considered, the LWF has officially adopted this concept of unity. Nevertheless, this concept is well suited to provide us with valuable help in pointing the way in the present phase of the ecumenical struggle, since it describes a way to unity which does not automatically entail the surrender of confessional traditions and confessional identities. This way to unity is a way of living encounter, spiritual experience together, theological dialogue and mutual correction, a way on which the distinctiveness of each partner is not lost sight of but rings out, is transformed and renewed, and in this way becomes visible and palpable to the other partners as a legitimate form of Christian existence and of the one Christian faith. There is no glossing over the differences. Nor are the differences simply preserved and maintained unaltered. On the contrary, they lose their divisive character and are reconciled to each other.

(155) In all our endeavours for unity, this element of reconciliation needs to be strongly emphasised. For unity and reconciliation do not mean mere coexistence. They mean genuine church fellowship, including as essential elements the recognition of baptism, the mutual recognition of church ministries, and a binding common purpose of witness and service.

(156) Various ways of making this unity a reality are being suggested and taken today. One of these, which would closely correspond to the model of "reconciled diversity", would call in particular for the following steps:

- A statement expressing the common ground represented by the basic understanding of the gospel and thus making clear that the differences which still remain rest upon this common basis.

- A theological account of why and the extent to which the differences which still remain represent legitimate forms of Christian faith and church government and can be held together within the fellowship.

- A declaration that the anathemas pronounced on the partners in the past are no longer applicable to them in their present form and identity.

(157) Christian unity means unity in diversity, not uniformity. To the extent that the concept of "reconciled diversity" takes this seriously, it comes very close to the concept of "conciliar fellowship" as recently developed in the WCC(10), and cannot be put forward as a rival to this concept. There is indeed a difference between the concept of "reconciled diversity" and the concept of "conciliar fellowship", in that the latter seems to take insufficiently into account the legitimacy of the confessional differences and therefore the need to preserve them. Insofar as the concept of "conciliar fellowship" also allows room for the diversity of the confessional traditions and for church fellowships as custodians of these traditions, the difference which still separates the two concepts will disappear. The result would be a concept of church unity in which both the tendencies mentioned at the beginning of this section (150) could exist side by side within the ecumenical movement.

(10) Cf. Nairobi 1975, Sect. II, paras. 3 ff.

III. ECUMENICAL METHODOLOGY

(158) A study of ecumenical methodology was conducted from 1973 to 1976 by the LWF Department of Studies and the Strasbourg Institute for Ecumenical Research, at the request of the LWF Executive Committee. The purpose was to clarify the purposes and aims of interconfessional conversations at different levels. The following comments are largely based on the findings of that study and on the international consultation held in connection with it in Geneva in June 1976.

A. DOCTRINAL CONSENSUS AND KOINONIA

(159) As the New Testament understands it, koinonia is the christological and sacramental fellowship which takes concrete historical form through participation in the Word and Sacraments as gifts of salvation. It is not simply the response of faith to the reception of salvation but itself the historical expression of the received gift of salvation. As the Christian community receives Christ's body, "the many" are "one body" (1 Cor,10:16 ff.). This means that the saving power of Christ is present in the form of participation in the gift of salvation and of certain concrete external phenomena, functions and ministries.

(160) Koinonia cannot, therefore, be considered in isolation from the reception of the gift of salvation but is inseparably bound up with this reception. Nor can this connection be dissolved from the one side or the other. Observable empirical historical actions and experiences on the part of a group of Christians are still, in themselves, ambiguous phenomena and do not add up to koinonia unless they are embraced within the common reception of the gifts of salvation. On the other hand, reception of the gifts of salvation if unaccompanied by common action and life is not koinonia but is subject to the judgement of God.

(161) Because koinonia in this sense is the historical manifestation of the received gift of salvation, solidarity in witness, teaching and confession is essential to its very nature. This is what we mean, in ecumenical terminology, by consensus.

(162) Koinonia is essentially broader than the consensus possible in a particular historical situation. Since New Testament times, there have been and still are differences in witness, teaching and confession which are contingent on situations and understanding, and which have their place within the setting of the given koinonia which embraces them and which can coexist with one another in their plurality.

(163) But there have been and are cases when a basic dissensus breaks up the koinonia and makes withdrawal from church fellowship inevitable. An ecumenism based on the view that any form of teaching may be assimilated in principle within a legitimate plurality is therefore untenable.

(164) Every consensus, and equally every dissensus, is historically and contextually contingent in the sense that the demands made on the Church in a specific historical situation require a specific witness, teaching and confession of the received gift of salvation. Consensus or dissensus arise as a particular challenge is accepted or refused in a manner appropriate to the substance of the gospel and to the specific situation.

(165) The consensus achieved in a restricted situation can in many cases become important for the whole Christian family, if it brings to light some essential aspects of the understanding of the received saving gift of the gospel and is therefore of concern to the whole Church.

(166) We must at the same time reckon with the possibility that God, by His present action to establish koinonia is able to overcome doctrinal differences which arose in certain past historical situations. This may take the form of a healing of division by an agreement on faith. But the same result may also be achieved when divided churches make use of available opportunities of common action and service as the starting point for a consensus in which confession assumes a form appropriate to the substance of the gospel and to the present historical situation.

(167) Certain forms of worship and inherited forms of church government, while not essential for salvation (according to CA VII) in the sense that the valid reception of Word and Sacrament as gifts of salvation depends on these forms, are nevertheless clearly of extreme importance for the form and manner in which the gifts of salvation are communicated and received and also for the question of the unity of the Church. While the basic ecumenical thrust of the *satis est* of CA VII is to be endorsed, this does not exclude the additional aspects mentioned above.

(168) Attention must, therefore, be paid in ecumenical discussions not only to doctrinal questions and theological agreements, but also to the concrete form of worship and the distinctive features of church ministry and church government: where are there structures suited to the common confession, teaching and attestation of the gospel relevantly to the actual situation or which hinder these things ?

(169) In the Lutheran view, church doctrine can never be understood as pure theory and the New Testament itself testifies to the intimate interrelation between "theory" and "practice" since the insights achieved on the basis of God's act of revelation in the gospel becomes manifest in the practical life of the Church. This means that conclusions can be drawn from this practice concerning the theory underlying it and that the theory itself, in the sense of right doctrine, can be seriously endangered by this actual practice which itself accordingly often leads to new verbalized insights into the nature of the received gift of salvation and thus to the construction of new "theories".

The faith-inspiring Word, which creates the Church, is not simply identical with correct theological teaching, and compared with that faith-establishing Word, a formal doctrinal consensus resulting from intellectual exercise is always secondary.

(170) The doctrinal factors have primary significance for the unity of the Church only on this understanding of the relation between church doctrine and practice, and, indeed because in the last analysis Christian unity is unity in proclamation (cf. CA VII) as the source of faith and fellowship. Doctrinal consensus, too, therefore, in the sense of unity in the doctrine preached, remains as before an urgent goal of ecumenical efforts.

B. THE SO-CALLED "NON-DOGMATIC" FACTORS

(171) The Church as the body of Christ lives by its Lord's gifts in Word and Sacrament; it knows it is called, gathered and sanctified to faith by the Holy Spirit and it exists as God's people in the world as a human fellowship, a social group.

(172) This social form of faith, and therefore the Church's inescapable involvement in legal, economic and social forms and all the concerns these entail, has never been a merely adventitious outward clothing but part and parcel of its very existence in history, corresponding with God's saving action which, so far from bypassing history, takes place within history.

(173) The forms of this involvement are to be observed in the first instance, objectively and evaluated positively because it is in keeping with the gospel that the Church should acquire an authentic form in all cultures. They are, in fact, legitimate and essential because in the context of revelation and history, faith and reason, church and society, they must be understood as the incarnation of salvation, and therefore scrutinised in order that their function and ecclesiological significance may be discovered. Dangers can also arise, however, as a result of this involvement, threats to the Church's identity and unity. National churches began to diverge confessionally as early as the fifth century. The authenticity perhaps achieved in the cultural context was accompanied by a loss of catholicity. Here again, there is no denying that it is possible for different ethnic and cultural traditions or social strata or even local power structures to be reflected in the spectrum of various denominations or regional jurisdictions of the same denomination living separately from each other. An ecumenical methodology cannot exclude such observations which call for objective theological reflection on our part.

(174) These forms of involvement are ambivalent and their effect may be either positive or divisive. They can stimulate a sense of church unity within a given group or in a common historical situation. But tensions between various groups can also be reinforced by them into conflicts within the Church or between churches and in such conflicts the Church's true identity and unity may be at risk.

(175) The bond between church and people may, for example, express the vitality and authenticity of the faith within a given culture which itself may consequently be changed because of it. But in mixed racial areas such as Southern Africa, when the colour of the skin determines church frontiers and when people are not constrained even by the same confession of faith to live and witness together to the fellowship in Christ which embraces all peoples and transcends all racial barriers, it is not only the unity of the Church which is abandoned but its very identity in Christ which is radically endangered.

(176) The latter case is cited only as an example of many situations of conflict within the world Lutheran family. Similar critical happenings in other churches could have been examined to discover how far new challenges arising from the Church's involvement in national social structures have led to the emergence of fresh groupings curring right across existing confessional churches. Very different answers will be given when we ask how far this threat to existing church unity can also be an opportunity for renewed church fellowship.

(177) These interconnections first came into view in ecumenical discussions when church unity was threatened or the achievement of church fellowship was hindered, by institutional rigidity on the part of the churches engaged in ecumenical dialogue, for example. Since the unity of the Church is a unity of faith which can be formulated and examined in doctrinal discussions, as both the ancient Church and the Reformation were convinced it was, theological dialogue obviously seemed the appropriate method for overcoming confessional divisions. Factors which still hindered church union even when agreement had been reached in doctrinal discussions should therefore be described, it was suggested, as "non-theological" (Edinburgh 1937, Lund 1952), "secular" (Evian 1970) or "non-dogmatic" (LWF Basic Statement on Ecumenical Methodology, Strasbourg and Geneva, 1973) factors.

(178) None of these labels, however, is a particularly happy one. For one thing, and this was true even in the days of polemical theology, the confessions are at odds precisely over the question as to which elements in the historical form of the Church are doctrinally binding and which are not. (We might give here as an example, the division of the Missouri Synod over the issue of the value of historical criticism of the Bible). But the expression "non-theological factors" is unsatisfactory, above all, because it clouds the realization that the structures or factors in question must be examined so as to discover their relevance for the unity and identity of the Church. But this can only be achieved by reference to standards and to that extent dogmatically. Nor is it satisfactory, either, therefore, to talk of "non-dogmatic factors" or of "secular factors", since the involvement of the Church in history is not something foreign to the Church's nature. Finally, various differences and divisions in the field of social ethics and social justice sometimes point to hidden theological lines of division within one and the same Church.

(179) But more important than finding an appropriate label for these factors is to recognize that it is not beyond but within these historical forms that the Church is promised unity, holiness, apostolicity and catholicity.

It is within history that the Church has to maintain and authenticate its reality as Church. To use every helpful method available in order to test critically the various aspects of the Church's involvement in history, is therefore, an inescapable theological task. The only methods which can be really helpful here are, of course, integrated ones which should not be described negatively ("non-dogmatic", etc.) to mark them off from theology.

(180) Every effort to clarify the Church's involvement as a social organization within the historical structures of society, i.e. the so-called "non-theological" factors, helps forward, therefore, the effort to discern the Church's true identity and unity. In the Nicene Creed this identity is described in the marks of the Church - namely its unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity:

(181) 1) According to the Augsburg Confession, for this unity it suffices (*satis est*) that the Word of God should be taught in its purity, i.e. proclaimed in accordance with the gospel, and that the Sacraments should be rightly administered (CA VII). This statement is not intended to restrict the reality of the Church to a narrow area of liturgical actions but rather to point clearly to the source which makes the Church the Church, to the only source of its unity and identity in history. For, in Word and Sacrament, through His own presence in the means of grace, Christ Himself builds the Church and in doing so creates its unity. Word and Sacrament, therefore, are also signs of unity by which it can be recognized that God is at work in His Church.

(182) 2) The holiness of the Church also has its source in Christ Himself, in Word and Sacrament. It has to be expressed, perhaps even more clearly than unity, in the life of the Church. One of the signs of holiness (which Luther calls *notae ecclesiae*) is discipleship of the Crucified. By these signs, too, Christ can be recognized as being with His Church and sanctifying it. This has to be believed, lived and experienced. This does not mean that human works become the criteria of the Church's holiness but these visible signs show whether a church is living obediently or disobediently as a social body, and in this way they can become, indirectly, a touchstone to tell whether its proclamation and faith correspond to the apostolic gospel.

(183) 3) This apostolicity of the Church is also its continuity in history. It is to be recognized primarily, of course, in the domain of preaching and of the apostolic teaching which is the criterion of preaching and which, in the Lutheran tradition, is expressed in the Church's confession of faith. While the latter is always in the form of theological statements which inevitably bear the mark of their period, it is nevertheless an attempt to register the abiding basis of the gospel which precedes all theological interpretations. Even the Church's apostolicity is not to be regarded as a retreat to a past orthodoxy as if we were exempt from the need for decision today. It is the very nature of the Church to be subject to the criterion of its own preaching. A social body which thinks of itself as the Church while rejecting this criterion no longer remains within the continuity of the *Una Sancta*.

(184) 4) The catholicity of the Church includes its ecumenical dimension and responsibility. Because God is also at work in His means of grace among Christians of other church traditions, other cultural contexts, other ethnic or racial origins, we are not at liberty to cut ourselves off and isolate ourselves from them unless we want to imperil our own identity and that of other Christians.

(185) Everything which God is doing today to build and maintain His Church presses towards actualization in every area of life and experience, which is what is really envisaged when we speak of "non-dogmatic factors". To want to have nothing to do with faith's consequences in history, to seek to shrink the Church's identity to the narrow confines of a doctrinal consensus remote from life and unlived in the world of today is to deny the dynamic of the source of the Church's identity who drives the Church out from worship to obedience and the praise of God in the world.

(186) The *satis est* of the Augsburg Confession cannot, therefore, be taken to mean that over heresy or wrong liturgical action exhaust the possibilities of falling away from the unity of the Church. Even those who are not prepared to draw the inescapable consequences of the unity of faith in the common liturgy or who, outside the walls of the Church, because of the pressure of the so-called "non-dogmatic factors", again call in question the fellowship given in Christ at the altar, instead of making this fellowship a lived reality, they too spurn the sacrament and disown its Giver. So too, relationships of dependence which imperil brotherly partnership must be criticised in the light of the gift of Christ which unites us to one another.

(187) According to ancient Lutheran tradition, even questions of order, where divergent decisions are in principle possible, can, *in statu confessionis*, i.e. when it is a case of the concrete confession of Christ today, become signs whereby membership of the Church, fidelity to its continuity and identity, can be recognized. Here again, it is the so-called "non-dogmatic factors" which provide the setting in which church identity is preserved and attested.

(188) This has clear consequences in view of our experiences of the unity bestowed and in view of the conflicts of our time. Sister churches have to help each other to hold fast to the true unity and identity of the Church and this is, therefore, also a task for the Lutheran World Federation.

(189) There are two aspects to this task: In the first place, we must seize the opportunity to help and encourage churches of different traditions in a given area or the same historical situation to grow together on the basis of authentic preaching, baptism and the Lord's Supper. The confession of the Wittemberg Reformation, in particular, leaves us no other choice here. But, secondly, we must see equally clearly that there is also a breach of church fellowship when the involvement of the Church in specific social situations is made an excuse for not practising the fellowship bestowed by Christ at the altar or not living it on the basis of the altar.

To state this is not to infringe the legal autonomy of other churches but rather to show catholic, ecumenical responsibility. And if we are to be able to say this concretely, detailed analysis of this involvement of the Church, in other words, of these so-called "non-dogmatic factors", is necessary so as to bring them to the bar of the gospel.

C. THE QUESTION OF METHOD IN ECUMENICAL ENCOUNTER

(190) It is generally agreed that we need to reflect thoroughly on the method (s) to be used in interconfessional encounters. Without this preliminary reflection about method we cannot adequately know or define clearly enough either the purpose of interchurch contacts in any given case, or the extent to which still-existing differences are divisive of the Church. Previous experiences of dialogue show that interchurch encounters have again and again failed to achieve the maximum result and to pave the way for further fruitful convergence simply because the question of method was not clarified sufficiently beforehand. It is also clear from experience that the discussion of dogmatic problems which are vital for all the partners in the dialogue and the debate on problems which arise from the course and inherent dynamic of a discussion are a very fruitful process. In this process careful scientific preparations and the examination of basic theological questions which this process entails have proved to be an indispensable presupposition of a successful issue to interconfessional dialogue. The setting of limited objectives which also represent a gradual patient convergence between the confessions involved, seems also to be required by a realistic assessment of the general ecumenical situation. Of course this does not exclude as exact a definition as is possible of the long term goal on which the ecumenical method largely depends.

(191) There is a close connection between the question of method and the complex process of the reception of the findings of interconfessional dialogues, a process which should ultimately lead to official decisions by the Churches with a view to the achievement of unity. Among the elements in this reception process are changes in the interconfessional climate, changes in thought and practice, the emergence of new and still unformulated convergences, the final formulation of provisional agreements and, finally, the official decisions of the churches concerned. Reception should, therefore, not be limited simply to the official ratification of documents. Interconfessional dialogues and the convergences achieved as a result of them are an integral part of this process. They are themselves one form and expression of this process since they clarify and formulate existing convergences and agreements in the thinking of the participant churches. At the same time their aim is to provide an impetus to further changes in thinking and in the attitude of churches to one another. The reception of ecumenical findingswill, of course, depend on the particular situation but the more an interconfessional dialogue reflects and registers a process of change which is already taking place, the sooner it will also win official recognition.

(192) Corresponding to these convictions about the connection between consensus and koinonia is the recognition that a theological agreement at the supra-regional level must be tested and verified in the achievement of real koinonia at the congregational level. Otherwise, the agreement reached is in danger of becoming incredible or even vanishing altogether. Care must in any case be taken to ensure that agreements reached at the international level are not nullified or undermined by practical measures and actions at the local level. On the other hand, when the koinonia experienced goes beyond a formal doctrinal consensus, this must be worked out theologically as a matter of urgency. It would mean asking what the common possession of essential elements and features of worship by different confessions and churches signifies.

(193) The emergence of contextual methods in theology and the accompanying denial that the discussions of doctrine is the only method of bringing the confessions closer together, led to the realization that the question of method is in itself a theological question and not just a technical matter. The intensification of the doctrinal discussion and, above all, the non-implementation of its findings call for the continuation of previous reflection on method. The fact that an achieved doctrinal consensus is not being put into practice may, of course, indicate that dogmatic agreement needs to be taken to a deeper level. On the other hand, it would be superficial to seek the solution of such problems solely by continuing doctrinal discussion. Indeed, by analysing the common action of doctrinally divided churches, we might discover the dogmatic convergence operating in this common action and significant material for the ecumenical dialogue. The contextual method could also pinpoint aspects of a church's doctrine which have become really determinative of its life and also investigate the extent to which ecumenically important aspects result from this.

(194) The need emphasised above (180 ff.) to consider and interpret theologically for the sake of the identity of the Church of Jesus Christ all factors which exercise an influence on it in this world, calls for this new method, sometimes called "interdisciplinary" method. It is therefore generally acknowledged also that in the effort for Church unity various factors are at work which can only be illuminated with the aid of empirical methods. As a necessary instrument for the adequate understanding of the ecumenical situation, especially at the local level, it has mainly a diagnostic function. Of course the victory over the "non-dogmatic" factors in church division will ultimately be the fruit of faith and a gift of the Spirit (cf. Gal.3:28). Yet this method contributes in a vital way to the localisation and understanding of the divisive factors and must therefore be made fruitful for our ecumenical efforts.

(195) A further clarification is needed in this description of the new approach to ecumenical method as "contextual" or "interdisciplinary". Strictly speaking, the term "interdisciplinary" refers to the relation between theology and other sciences. In this relationship, theology and other disciplines do not each have different subjects or "spheres". They are in fact concerned with one and the same reality in which many factors interact and all of them can be reflected on theologically and subjected to interdisciplinary enquiry. All these necessary perspectives must then be related to each other in a critical and self-critical way.

From a theological standpoint, two aspects are especially important when considering the interaction of the various factors:

(196) a) The radical involvement of the life of the churches and therefore of church unity, in the life of the nations and of humanity as a whole in history, is not a secondary aspect added on from outside but, according to the biblical witness, intimately connected with the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ for the realization of His saving Lordship in His creation. Hence the life of the churches is always both directed to, and conditioned by, the history of the created world.

(197) b) According to the witness of the Bible, this created world is not a neutral arena but the scene of the struggle between the power of God and the forces of evil. One consequence of this is that human societies are always marked by the illegitimate lordship of human beings over others and by illegitimate dependency. But according to the teaching of Jesus, the powers of the world are being overcome in the church and through the church, as the unity of mankind is created through God's Spirit without illegitimate dependencies. But the powers of God and the powers of evil are locked in conflict side by side in society and in the Church and the church, therefore, is involved in the same ambivalencies as society.

(198) The importance of the function which the social sciences can perform for the life and unity of the churches is due to the fact that these sciences deal with the negative and positive aspects of certain factors which are also operative in the life of the churches in human societies: the fact that churches live in unequal and unilateral relationships in these societies and consequently that structures of dependence and oppression are found in them too (e.g. social classes, racial discrimination, imperialism, colonialism, and so on); the fact that on the other hand, the changing or amelioration of such structures provides a good opportunity for Christian solidarity and fellowship. The social sciences can contribute valuable insights and tools enabling us to discover and analyse at a scientific level the contingent factors which hinder the growth of ecumenical fellowship. At the same time they can point to ways and means of promoting and encouraging ecumenical fellowship within the limits of the possible. But care needs to be taken, too, to ensure that, in adopting the findings of the social sciences, we do not also adopt the claim they sometimes make to offer a total explanation of reality. We must insist on the rights of theological reflection.

(199) The case-study method suggested and partly implemented in the LWF Study on Ecumenical Methodology encourages self-analysis and critical awareness. In the ecumenical context, case-studies can be used specifically:

a) in the local reception of insights gained at the international level;

b) to identify and deal with "non-dogmatic factors" which operate divisively and to understand the relationship between faith and empirical realities (anti-docetic movement).

These case-studies enable us to discover the often concealed and unconscious mechanisms which influence the life of the churches in fellowship both positively and negatively. Since the factors unearthed have to be viewed not in isolation but in relation to a wider context (historical, national, regional, international), it must be remembered that factors which can be a positive influence in a national context may have negative effects in a wider context. What seems positive in the short run can have negative consequences in the middle and long run. Because they may uncover hidden conflicts, they call for particularly careful handling and an ecumenical pedagogy. The case-studies conducted so far do not indicate in principle the value of this method, especially since it has not yet been possible to evaluate them sufficiently and the range of refined techniques available for this method has not yet been adequately used. It is also necessary to define precisely the limits and possibilities of this method in the ecumenical field. The study of these questions should be continued. If it is decided to continue using this method as one among others in promoting ecumenical relations, more resources will be needed than have so far been made available. Finally, these studies should also be conducted with ecumenical participation, which has not always been the case hitherto.

(200) Although these reflections favour the use of interdisciplinary contextual methods in the future, it is necessary to stress on the other hand that an exclusive use of these methods would detract from the representative and binding character of church participation in the ecumenical dialogue. There would be a danger of losing the diversity of the views of individual churches. Although the new approach is intended actually to strengthen inter-church commitment at the local level, the problem would also remain of what universal significance the insights gained in local contexts have and of how the case-study findings can be translated into conceptual terms. The contextual method must therefore be regarded as a complement to the previously applied methods of interconfessional encounter. Priority must continue to be given to doctrinal discussion in the efforts for church unity. Certainly it would not be a genuine and complete doctrinal discussion if the secular dimensions of the Church were ignored. Just because the Church's involvement in the world is so complex and doctrine so deeply embedded in church practice, the doctrinal discussion needs to be complemented by the contextual method.

IV. ECUMENICAL STRATEGY

A. GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND GOALS

(201) As we move into the process of implementing our ecumenical commitment, the driving force of our work should be:

> the sorrow we feel for the divisions of the one Church of Jesus Christ on earth,
>
> the desire for a new situation where the churches can confess together, and join together in a fuller expression of the praise we owe to our one Lord, God Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and
>
> the hope that the forces which cause such extensive anguish, suffering and death in our world, might be overcome by the healing and unifying power of Christ.

(202) The guidelines for our commitment as a fellowship of Lutheran churches in the context of the ecumenical movement may be described in the following convictions:

(203) (a) We are under obligation to strive together to bring forth the true unity of the Church (Eph. 4 ff.). This basic obligation constrains us, both within our own churches and in wider organisational structures of an ecumenical character, to seek whatever possibilities exist for eliminating the obstacles to this unity.

(204) (b) The guiding principle of our efforts is the basic universal unity which we believe the churches share as long as they are committed to the one Apostolic Faith. In this universal character of the Church we see a sign that it transcends national, cultural, ethnic and confessional boundaries and we will work for a fuller realization of the given fellowship which is grounded on the faith of our Fathers.

(205) (c) We want to stress the fact that the unity we seek should be an outward, visible unity which is becoming historically manifest in the life of the churches. The confession of the invisible unity of the Church is not a sufficient expression of the true unity that we seek.

(206) (d) The unity that we seek should serve the missionary and diaconical mandate of the Church in the world. This is a mandate which is given to the Church as a whole, and it is not adequately fulfilled until the churches in a joint effort do whatever they can do to fulfil their common responsibility.

(207) (e) In seeking a wider common responsibility we also realize that the indirect witness of the Church to the world is strengthened by cooperation between the churches in practical enterprises and in service to the whole world. In as far as such practical cooperations demonstrate

the unity of the Church they should be regarded as a constant challenge to work on the theological issues and church structures that still are regarded as divisive between the churches.

(208) (f) In planning for our future ecumenical involvement we should constantly bear in mind that the encounter with other churches may mean an enrichment of our own insights and convictions. We want to avoid the danger of confessionalistic exclusiveness and not bar ourselves from the theological and ecclesiastical encounter which is offered through our ecumenical contacts. We should refine our own process of evaluating the critiques we receive from our partners and create better opportunities for a constructive self-reflection of the Lutheran churches together.

(209) (g) Since the Bible is the common possession of all Christian churches and recognized by them as the norm of their life and action, we emphasize the importance of the Holy Scriptures as an indispensable basis and point of reference for ecumenical endeavours.

(210) (h) Although as historical responses of the churches to the gospel, confessions of faith cannot be regarded as absolute and final, but must remain patent of new interpretations and forms, we recognize the confessions of our Lutheran churches as a "true exposition of the Word of God" and as a valid expression of the basic elements of the Christian faith.
These confessions have an ecumenical orientation precisely because of their character as an interpretation of the Word of God. We consider it important to conduct our future ecumenical work in such a way that account is taken both of the validity of the confessions in essentials and of the ecumenical aspect of the Lutheran confession.

(211) On the basis of these general convictions we want to point out certain goals that we regard as essential in the future work of our Federation:

(212) (a) To further elaborate the concept of unity most consistent with our Lutheran tradition.
The concept of "reconciled diversity" needs to be tested as to what amount of confessional loyalty may be maintained that is compatible with the fellowship that the unity of the churches requires. In this regard a number of models of unity are to be explored.

(213) (b) To work increasingly for a real elimination of mistrust among the churches.
We see in this respect the value of an increased common commitment in service and mission. It is important to recognise that many differences such as plurality of ministries, forms of worship, piety, and church constitutions do not a priori have a church-divisive meaning.

(214) (c) To deal with theological divergencies among the churches.
What is needed here is an even clearer identification of possible substantial and terminological points of agreement, at the same time taking seriously the points of difference that reach down to the fundamental basis

of our Christian conviction. This work may still be best carried on through the bilateral dialogues which, however, call for a clear identification of the real issues which differ according to the dialogue partners.

(215) (d) To overcome ecclesiastical isolation.
This includes taking seriously the so-called non-dogmatic factors, which may contribute to a state of isolation as much as confessional exclusiveness. We see especially in this respect a promising worth of the use of interdisciplinary methods and the employment of case-studies. The techniques of this method and its relationship to reflexive evaluation need to be further refined.

(216) (e) To increase the number of possibilities for concrete ecumenical co-operation through adequate ecumenical organs on the world level or through bilateral or multilateral efforts on the local and regional level.
We see the need for an even more positive involvement of the Lutheran World Federation on the general ecumenical scene, and feel the necessity for working out a clearer policy for this kind of activity, keeping in mind that the Federation shall serve its member churches. This would include a clearer guidance as to how to act as Lutherans in response to the ecumenical challenges of our time.

(217) (f) To work out better guidelines for implementation of the ecumenical fellowship in the local community.
This will include active stimulation and practical advice to the member churches in their task to disseminate the results of ecumenical agreements into the life of congregations. It will further include facilitating the development of agreements already reached into new spheres of theological or practical cooperation (like the post-Leuenberg doctrinal discussions).

(218) (g) To strengthen and broaden the scope of common Lutheran witness in a pluralistic society.
Due respect must be paid here to a permissible variety of theological concepts within Lutheranism and at the same time a vision must be developed as to how to help to define anew the basic conviction of our faith in a way which speaks to the situation of our member churches today and at the same time is consistent with the historical confessions. In view of these tasks, the idea of a pan-Lutheran Council should be explored.

B. INTERCONFESSIONAL CONVERSATIONS AND THEMES

(219) The recommendations made by the LWF Theological Commission in 1969/70 in *Guidelines for Ecumenical Encounters* have stood the test of time and are still valid today. Moreover, they are in accordance with the mandates of the Evian Assembly (cf. 25-31). But some points have become more urgent and new emphases have emerged as a result of advances in the ecumenical dialogue and theological reflection.

(220) Yet it will be necessary, in particular, to adjust the priorities for the next years. One of the most urgent tasks will be the reception in all member churches of the insights gained thus far in the course of dialogues. Concerning bilateral dialogues, special attention is to be given to the Orthodox Church.

1. Reception

(221) The bilateral doctrinal discussions engaged in thus far by the LWF and individual member churches has brought a large measure of mutual understanding. This reflects not only the real change in the mutual relationships of the participant churches but also the fact that agreements reached through these conversations have begun to alter the churches' relationships to each other.

222) But not all the members of the Lutheran world family have been affected in the same way by this change. This is partly because, for various reasons, not all the member churches have been involved to the same extent even in conversations conducted under the auspices of the LWF, and partly because many of these discussions have taken place at the regional level (Leuenberg Agreement; Lutheran/Roman Catholic talks in the USA; discussions with the Orthodox churches). One vital and increasingly urgent task, therefore, is to draw all Lutheran churches into the process whereby the fruits of these discussions are critically received. The very fact that discussions with different church traditions forces Lutheran theology to examine new themes, makes it necessary for the churches to test and give general assent to the insights acquired in these discussions, if they are to have ecclesial weight.

(223) The same applies in principle to the findings of multilateral agreements, of the kind which have been reached in the studies of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC, for example. Special reference must be made here to the Accra document: *One Baptism, One Eucharist and a mutually recognized Ministry.*

(224) In a number of cases, new church initiatives have been made possible by the accord in the Christian faith achieved in doctrinal discussions.

(225) - The Lutheran churches of Europe which have accepted the Leuenberg Agreement are now in church fellowship with Reformed and United churches which have also endorsed this Agreement.

(226) - Certain member churches regard it as possible for Lutheran Christians in special circumstances to share fully in a Catholic celebration of the Eucharist, including receiving communion, and conversely for Catholic Christians to do so in Lutheran communion services (cf. for example VELKD's Memorandum on Pastoral Theology).

(227) While regulations of this kind fall within the competence of individual member churches, they undoubtedly concern all churches of the Lutheran world family. The proposal is not that all Lutheran churches be invited

to receive such decisions as their own. But it may be useful for sister churches to take note of the changes and to study the reasons for them in order to determine the possible implications for their own decisions in the area of inter-church relations.

(228) This wish is in accordance with the LWF's readiness to recognize and encourage new partnerships on the local and regional levels (see above para. 143 ff.). Such regionalization, which aims at helping members to make the unity of the church in witness and service visible in a given geographical area and thus to give clearer expression to its identity within its environment, should not, however, lead to these churches' isolation as regards the worldwide ecumenical context. In realistic terms, there is no institution that could in the near future relieve the LWF of the task of being the instrument for the member's involvement in worldwide ecumenism.

(229) In order that this reception process may be advanced at its various levels, it is suggested that member churches of the LWF should inform the General Secretary of inter-church relations, and that the General Secretary should in turn inform the member churches of such church decisions.

(230) The LWF should lend its assistance when individual member churches or a group of Lutheran churches in a particular region desire to utilize the experience of other Lutheran churches in the interconfessional dialogue and in the reception of the findings of this dialogue. The proposal of the Lutheran/Reformed Joint Working Group that the LWF Executive Committee should approve the appointment of Lutheran/Reformed advisory teams to meet in a particular country in order to further "efforts to achieve full fellowship in accordance with the given situation in each case" is to be welcomed as a step in this direction.

2. Partners in Dialogue

(231) The ecumenical commitment of the Lutheran churches will continue in the future to require their participation in multilateral conversations as well as their pursuance and initiation of bilateral conversations.

(232) The goal of all these conversations will necessarily be the furtherance of the visible unity of the Church. Immediate objectives will differ from one partner church to another. The hope that church divisions will be set aside, a hope rooted in the promise of our Lord Himself, lends seriousness and weight to the dialogue even when the immediate objective is simply greater mutual understanding.

(233) With regard to the degree of priority or urgency of the encounter with individual churches, the *Guidelines for Ecumenical Encounters* of 1969/70 had specifically pointed out the diversity of regional interconfessional situations in which individual Lutheran churches find themselves in their respective countries. (9). When deciding on priorities, the LWF will take into account the specific spiritual importance of the possible dialogue partner within Christianity as a whole as reflected by their participation in multilateral ecumenical and theological work. This is especially relevant with regard to the encounter with Orthodox churches.

a) Lutheran/Orthodox Relationships

(234) Theological discussions with the Orthodox churches have long been proceeding at the regional level. In view of the ecumenical importance of the Orthodox tradition and with a view to more effective coordination of the regional dialogues, these discussions should in the future be considered more clearly as a task of the LWF as a whole. This can be done in two ways: by greater involvement of the LWF in the individual regional discussions and by greater willingness to enter into discussions with Orthodoxy as a whole at the level of world organizations.

(235) In some countries (e.g. Finland and Rumania), Lutheran and Orthodox churches have long lived in close proximity, and in other countries (e.g. Germany) there are special historical ties. In the USA there have been relationships of yet another kind. These different situations will continue to call for regional or national meetings in the future. Increased participation by the LWF in such discussions will also serve to emphasize the fact that in such dialogue each individual Lutheran church represents the whole Lutheran fellowship of churches, just as such dialogue also imposes on the individual Orthodox churches a certain responsibility for the whole of Orthodoxy.

(236) The LWF must also be in readiness, however, to engage in a pan-Orthodox/pan-Lutheran dialogue. Obviously thorough discussions would be needed here with all the appropriate Orthodox authorities.

(237) On the part of Lutherans such a universal dialogue should from the very beginning include representatives from those member churches in whose countries no encounters comparable to such regional doctrinal conversations have yet taken place (e.g. India and Ethiopia). This recommendation is not to be understood as prejudging the outcome of the conversations between the Orthodox and the non-Chalcedonian churches.

(238) The initial objective in meetings between Orthodox and Lutheran churches for doctrinal discussions and in mutual invitations to share in each other's worship will always be better mutual understanding. But we also have to enquire about the extent to which, in the doctrinal statements of the partner church and the indirect expression of doctrine in different forms of spiritual life and daily practice, we recognize the same apostolic gospel by which our churches live. Here again, we have to look for signs of the unity of the Church in the different forms of Christian faith fashioned over the course of the centuries of mutual isolation, and constantly to establish signs of the growing consensus as the dialogue advances.

(239) Previous meetings of Orthodox and Lutherans already show that the koinonia we share goes beyond what can be formulated today in a doctrinal consensus. This permits us to search for ways of expressing this common ground which can at the same time help to broaden and deepen the doctrinal consensus. One possible appropriate step here would be for the President of the LWF to commission Lutherans as contact persons, to serve as "ecumenical ambassadors" with the larger Orthodox partner churches. The precise task, status and role of such persons would need to be clarified in agreement with the Orthodox partner churches.

b) Pentecostalists and Charismatic Movements

(240) Plans for contacts with Pentecostalists and members of Charismatic movements were already being prepared at Evian. The important consideration here was not just the fact that many member churches, especially those in Latin America, were confronted with an urgent task, but also and above all, the challenge which these Charismatic movements presented to Lutheran churches throughout the whole world. One reason why this line of study has not advanced beyond the preliminary stage is not unconnected with the unsuitability of the classical method of doctrinal discussion for the encounter with Pentecostalists and Charismatics. But another contributory factor is the existence of these groups not just as external partners of our Lutheran churches but even within these churches themselves.

(241) In the continuation of the study special attention should be given to the question of the forms of encounter which might be most appropriate for this set of partners, yet which would also show the extent to which agreement existed in the understanding of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. As far as possible, this work should be carried out in conjunction with other churches (cf. 249). Moreover, material should be collected and account taken of the results of the study by the Strasbourg Institute on new Transconfessional Movements(1). The assignment of specific aims for an encounter with Pentecostalists and Charismatic movements that continues to be under consideration will be possible at a later date only.

c) Baptists and Methodists

(242) Meetings with Baptists and Methodists as they were planned in Evian should in the first instance be initiated or intensified at the national or regional level.

d) Evangelicals

(243) In the case of the Evangelicals, similar considerations apply as for the dialogue with Pentecostalists and Charismatic movements.

e) Existing Partners in Dialogue

(244) Contacts with the LWF's partners in dialogue up to the present should be pursued at the regional level and at the level of the World Federation.

(245) On the basis of the consensus achieved in the Leuenberg Agreement, the Lutheran/Reformed partnership should be developed by ongoing doctrinal discussions in order to deepen the mutual church fellowship now practised

(1) *Neue transkonfessionelle Bewegungen*, Documents from the Evangelical, Action-Centered and Charismatic Movements, by Günther Gassmann, Harding Meyer, Gunars J. Ansons, Frankfurt 1976.

among them. The participating churches have appointed a special committee for this purpose. Ways and means of making the results of the Agreement fruitful beyond Europe should be explored, along the lines of No. 230.

(246) We approve the recommendations of the Joint Anglican/Lutheran Working Group, i.e. to continue or to initiate in the near future discussions, on a regional basis in the first instance, in Europe, the USA and Tanzania. The objective of these discussions should be to examine how far the remaining obstacles to full mutual recognition can be cleared away and what possibilities exist for cooperation or even closer unity wherever this is an especially urgent requirement (Tanzania).

(247) In the dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, the aim will also be to continue to eliminate existing differences in the understanding of the gospel and to discover the ecclesiological consequences of bilateral and multilateral conversations so far conducted. The very fact that these discussions have revealed such a great measure of agreement in the understanding of the gospel and in the proper administration of the sacraments raises important questions for the way in which both churches understand themselves. We must e.g. consider the significance of the fact that some distinguished Roman Catholic theologians consider it possible for the Roman Catholic Church to accept the *Confessio Augustana* as an expression of the Catholic faith.

3. The Wider Oikumene: Dialogue with Judaism

(248) The encounter between Christianity and Judaism is not part of the ecumenical dialogue in the strict sense. However, use of the word "dialogue" passes over the difference between discussions among Christians and discussions of Christians with representatives of other religions. Yet, according to Rom. 11:17 ff, the unity of the Church is based on us, the pagans, being grafted on the olive tree of the Old Testament church people by our belief in Christ. Because of this, dialogue with Judaism on the proper understanding of the promises of the Bible is one of the inalienable dimensions and elements of the search for Church unity. This is true irrespective of whatever political constellations might be involved. The aim of such a dialogue is to encourage reciprocal understanding in all spheres of life whereby confessing Christ is the measure of what indissolubly links us and what separates us. In principle, it is certainly desirable to conduct such discussions within a wider framework with the participation of different Christian denominations. Yet there are Lutheran churches whose history makes it particularly urgent that they change their conduct and their thinking. For this reason, the encounters with Judaism as well should be continued and deepened in the work of the LWF.

4. Multilateral Dialogues

(249) The 1969/70 *Guidelines for Ecumenical Encounters* had already stressed the fact that there was an implicit difference in character and method between the bilateral and multilateral conversations. In bilateral conversations it will be easier to establish certain specific church objectives than in the case of multilateral settings where the main concern is with better mutual understanding in a universal context. We must distinguish, however, between these multilateral meetings and the possibility of several churches or confessional families conducting together certain discussions on the basis of the consensus already acknowledged among them. The question to be looked at here is whether, and to what extent and on what occasions, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches should participate in a future pan-Orthodox/pan-Lutheran dialogue. In the case of meetings with Pentecostalists and Charismatics, an effort should be made to conduct discussions in cooperation with the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Cooperation with other churches would also be helpful in the case of dialogue with the Evangelicals.

(250) Since it will hardly be feasible for the Lutheran World Federation to be responsible for preparing multilateral meetings in the strict sense, this will be an area where cooperation with the World Council of Churches and its Faith and Order Commission will be important.

C. RELATIONSHIPS OF THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

1. With the World Council of Churches (WCC)

(251) a) In recent years many Lutheran churches throughout the world have expressed their ecumenical commitment through two international instruments, namely: the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. At the 1970 Evian Assembly, Section II("Ecumenical Commitment") discussed relations between these two organisations. It suggested that the "fruitful cooperation" which had developed between them be encouraged and that "new levels and methods of cooperation should be considered".

(252) b) Both organisations have an ecumenical commitment but the functions of each are different. However, questions have been raised by some who say that strengthening the confessional weakens the greater ecumenical fellowship. Concerns are also expressed about the dangers of duplication and competition. We recognise that there are differing views among the LWF member churches regarding these matters. Some member churches have developed structures that relate to both the WCC and the LWF, e.g. national committees in some Scandanavian countries.

(253) c) Lutheran involvement in the WCC and the LWF grows out of the two concerns, namely, the concern for confessional identity and unity among Lutherans on the one hand, and the commitment to the broader ecumenical movement on the other (see No. 134). This stance implies that as Lutherans act and grow together they can also contribute to the unity of the Church. In recent years, especially since the Nairobi Assembly of the WCC, there has been a growing recognition that World Confessional Families have an important role to play in the ecumenical movement.

(254) d) The LWF has placed its headquarters in Geneva in order to be in close contact with the WCC. The intention was to exchange information and avoid duplication, and coordinate activities where possible. These contacts have generally been of an informal nature, except where specific arrangements were made to act jointly or on each other's behalf. Examples of this are the joint responsibility for the Leuenberg and post-Leuenberg doctrinal discussions, the Tanganyika Refugee Service and the like.

(255) We believe that the LWF should continue these relationships and give serious consideration to special requests which might open up new opportunities for cooperation.

(256) It would seem appropriate, for example, for the LWF to serve as a facilitator for member churches as they seek to develop a Lutheran contribution to important issues taken up by the different units of the WCC, e.g. in the field of the churches' encounter with other faiths and ideologies.

The following areas of work in which there is already cooperation or coordination with the WCC should continue to receive attention in future

(257) The Church's Missionary Task: In recent years representatives of the WCC have attended meetings of the Commission on Church Cooperation. In turn the departmental director has taken part in deliberations of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC. An example of practical cooperation is the work carried out by the Department of Church Cooperation on behalf of the WCC (CCIA and PCR) in Namibia.

(258) World Service and Development: It is the experience of some members of the LWF that more than one Christian agency is desirable in carrying out service and development work; each one working with a different approach; each one working ecumenically. There are instances where a Lutheran agency can operate more effectively because it has a related constituency in the area, or, because it has developed special skill and expertise in meeting service needs.

(259) Studies and International Affairs: Including, for example, the Lutheran/Reformed conversations in Europe, or studies which afford Lutherans the opportunity of making a contribution to dealing with social problems and clarifying questions of social ethics (e.g. problems of the two kingdoms doctrine).

In this connection two questions arise:

(260) Should the LWF consider engaging in studies of its choice in which central concerns of the WCC are also tackled ? (Choice of such studies would be based on wishes expressed by the member churches.)

(261) Should the LWF operate as an agent of Lutheran member churches of the WCC in areas of concern in which a Lutheran response or contribution is desirable ?

2. With the World Confessional Families

(262) a) The Secretaries of the World Confessional Families have been meeting informally each year since 1958, together with consultants. Common concerns have been shared at these meetings, the most important being a more precise definition of the role of the World Confessional bodies within the ecumenical movement. As a result of their evaluation of the various bilateral dialogues an analysis of these was published under the title *Confessions in Dialogue*. The question of religious liberty has also been under consideration frequently in the meetings.

(263) b) The work of this group has grown in importance because of the increased number of bilateral dialogues and the network of relationships which has developed because of them. Through these bilaterals, for example, a special relationship with the Roman Catholic Church has been established. (It is important to note that the Roman Catholic Church is represented at the meetings as is the WCC.) Such relations will be developed and expanded in the future.

(264) c) The LWF has encouraged the Secretaries of World Confessional Families to continue their efforts to evaluate the bilaterals and to discuss informally the many aspects of WCF's involvements in the ecumenical movement.

3. With Lutheran churches which are not members of the LWF

(265) a) A number of Lutheran churches, as well as Lutheran congregations within union churches, do not belong to the LWF. The LWF in its constitution and activities expresses openness and concern for these "Lutheran churches and groups" , which it invites to its assemblies and assists where needed. Many of these churches concerned are involved in programs and activities of the LWF to a varying degree; some have close relations to LWF member churches.

(266) b) The LWF should continue to urgently invite all Lutheran churches to join the LWF as one way to "further a united witness to the gospel". In the future special attention will need to be given to churches of Asia, Africa and Latin America, a number of which are now in process of joining the Federation.

(267) c) Those Lutheran churches who question the fellowship with other Lutheran churches need to be challenged to examine their understanding of the Confessions and their reasons for remaining in isolation from others who subscribe to the same Confessions. The dialogue with these churches should be intensified through visits on the part of neighboring member churches, members of the LWF Executive Committee and staff.

(268) d) We propose that union churches with a Lutheran tradition should be invited to discuss the possibility of becoming a member of the LWF.

(269) e) The LWF should offer to enter into discussion with individual churches concerning the nature of the Federation and the meaning of membership. The challenge facing these churches is to take part in the ecumenical movement by joining with the other member churches of their own confessional family.

V. APPENDIX

(270) A. PARTICIPANTS

Members of the Working Group

President Rev. Dr. Robert J. Marshall, Chairperson
Rev. Dr. Soritua A.E. Nababan, Vice-Chairperson
Bishop Dr. Andreas Aarflot
Prof. Dr. Gottfried Brakemeier
Rev. Ezra Gebremedhin
Bishop D. Zoltán Káldy
Prof. D. Georg Kretschmar
Prof. Dr. Harding Meyer

LWF Staff

Rev. Dr. Carl H. Mau
Docent Rev. Peder Højen (Consultant 1975, 1976)
Rev. Dr. Daniel F. Martensen
Mrs. Antonia Bossart, Secretary

Interpreters

Mrs. Ursula Gassmann
Ms. Joan Mau

(271) B. MEETINGS

Skaade Folk High School, near Aarhus, Denmark,	August 19-22, 1974
Stichting Woudschoten, Zeist, the Netherlands,	August 24-30, 1975
Hotel Kollekolle, Vaerløse, Denmark,	August 28 - September 1,1976

C. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DECISIONS ON ECUMENICAL RELATIONS, Divonne, February 1977 (taken from the Minutes)

The report of the Standing Committee on Ecumenical Relations was introduced by Bishop Sundby as the Acting Chairperson of that Committee. He noted that, in addition to an overview of the current ecumenical relations of the LWF, the committee had dealt with two items of particular interest in the ongoing development of the whole ecumenical movement. His background remarks pointed out that confessional identity is no longer seen as the opposite to ecumenical commitment and Christian unity, but as inseparable from it. Moreover, bilateral conversations at various levels between worldwide communions and churches have increased very much in the past years and have become an important element in the general quest for unity, in addition to the multilateral work of the World Council of Churches. Thus two important items discussed by the standing committee, the projected Forum for bilateral conversations aimed to be "a consultative body and an instrument for common reflection on the bilateral conversations and their contribution", and the report of the Working Group on the Interrelations between the Various Bilateral Dialogues of the LWF. That Working Group had had the task to study the questions of the Lutheran identity in the light of the results mainly from the Malta and Pullach consultations and the Leuenberg Agreement, to discuss the problem of inner-Lutheran unity in the context of the ecumenical commitment and to develop an ecumenical strategy of the LWF, both in the ecumenical context and in relation to Lutheran non-member churches.

The Secretary for Interconfessional Studies, Dr. Martensen, then introduced the specific recommendations contained in the report of the standing committee. On the basis of these recommendations, the Executive Committee took the following actions:

10.1.2 Orthodox/Lutheran Relations

1. Orthodox pre-Synodical Conference

VOTED:

1. that the LWF officially accept the invitation by the Patriarch of Constantinople (on behalf of fourteen autocephalous churches) to engage in international level Orthodox/Lutheran dialogue, and

2. that the LWF move to establish a preparatory group to plan for future Orthodox/Lutheran dialogues on the international level (four to five in number), and

3. that this group should bring into its discussion

   a) the results of past and ongoing Orthodox/Lutheran dialogues carried out on the national or regional level,

   b) the results of the Orthodox/Lutheran consultations of 1971 and 1974, and

c) information relating to Orthodox/Lutheran relations in Ethiopia and India, as well as pastoral concerns emerging from the presence of Orthodox migrant workers in predominantly Lutheran countries.

2. Lutheran Contact Persons in Orthodox Centers

VOTED: that the question of whether or not to establish Lutheran contact persons in Orthodox centers be referred to the preparatory group dealing with future Orthodox/Lutheran relations.

It is understood that no action on the matter would be taken without the approval of the Executive Committee.

10.1.3 World Confessional Families

VOTED:

1. that the LWF support the ideal of a forum as being discussed by the Secretaries of World Confessional Families, and

2. that the Executive Committee designate any representatives to the forum, recognising both the possibilities and the limitations of such a forum - keeping in mind that the WCC Faith and Order Commission should be responsible only for making technical arrangements.

10.1.5 Report of the Working Group on the Interrelations between the Various Bilateral Dialogues

With regard to Anglican/Lutheran Relations (para. 88, 114, 246), the Executive Committee

VOTED:

1. that the LWF encourage the Anglican/Lutheran Joint Working Group to initiate future discussions on a regional level beginning with Tanzania, Europe, the USA and Brazil as planned by the Group itself, and

2. that the LWF ask the Joint Working Group to ensure, as the dialogues continue at any level, that there be still clearer definition of

a) the agreement in understanding the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, and

b) the agreement in understanding justification.

With regard to Roman Catholic/Lutheran relations, (para. 123, 131, 247), the Executive Committee

VOTED:

1. that the LWF request the Mixed Roman Catholic/Lutheran Commission to take appropriate steps to ensure that the "far-reaching consensus" in understanding justification which is affirmed in the Malta Report be explained and developed in greater detail, and

2. that, within the setting of its work, the commission be requested to ask what significance the fact that distinguished Catholic theologians hold it possible for the Roman Catholic Church to recognize the Augsburg Confession as a valid expression of the Catholic faith has for Roman Catholic/Lutheran relationships.

With regard to the question of "dual membership" (para. 145: whether a church may be simultaneously a member of the LWF and a member of another confessional family) the Executive Committee, recalling the 1970 Assembly "Statement concerning the attitude of the LWF to churches in union negotiations",

VOTED: to reiterate that it is recognised that "a united church may desire a relationship with more than one confessional family", and that "the LWF is willing to appoint representatives to discuss inter-church relationships with representatives from uniting churches and from their confessional family organizations."

With regard to Reformed/Lutheran relations (para. 228, 230, 244, 245), the Executive Committee

VOTED:

1. that the LWF approve the proposal of the Lutheran/Reformed Joint Working Group advocating the appointment of Lutheran/Reformed consultative teams to do work in specific regional settings on request, in consultation with the churches in each region, and that the Group be authorised to proceed with its work as planned.

2. that the LWF maintain contact with the continuing doctrinal discussions relating to the Leuenberg Agreement, and

3. that care be taken to draw the attention of other LWF member churches outside Europe, in some appropriate way, to the results of the dialogues.

Concerning contacts with the Baptists and Methodists (para. 242), the Executive Committee

VOTED:

1. that in keeping with its 1975 decision, conversations with Baptists and Methodists should be considered, initiated or intensified at the national, regional or local level, and

2. that the possibility of global dialogue with the Baptist and Methodist communities be kept in mind and implemented as soon as is practicable.

Although the following items are not normally the concern of the Standing Committee on Ecumenical Relations, they were introduced as part of the report of that committee since they were included in the report of the Working Group (para. 248, 256). The Executive Committee

VOTED:

1. that the encounters with Judaism carried out by the LWF be continued and deepened, and that the Federation cooperate with the multilateral efforts, including those of the WCC, in developing Jewish, Christian dialogue;

2. that the LWF take an active interest in conversations and studies in connection with other religions and ideologies, taking into account existing programs and evaluating such programs for the purpose of assisting the member churches as they participate in such conversations and studies.

Regarding the LWF's relationship with the WCC, the Executive Committee discussed but defeated the Standing Committee's recommendation concerning para. 261 "that the LWF function as an agent of Lutheran churches belonging to the WCC in areas of concern in which a Lutheran response or contribution would be desired".

Dealing with the general relationship (para. 251, 258, 259) it was

VOTED: that the LWF continue its present level of cooperation with the WCC giving serious consideration to existing and new opportunities for cooperation. Those to continue relate especially to Mission, World Service and Development, and Studies and International Affairs.

Regarding the future use of the Report of the Working Group on the Interrelations between the Various Bilateral Dialogues
the Executive Committee

VOTED:

1. to receive the report and express sincere thanks to the Working Group for its efforts during these past years, and

2. that the report of the Working Group, as discussed and modified (para. 256) by the Executive Committee, be circulated as a self-standing document for study by LWF members and others, and

3. that the document be appended to the Report of the Executive Committee to the Sixth Assembly of the LWF.

The matter of relationship to independent churches, particularly in Africa, was deferred.